



# REBIRTH: HOW A LOSER BECAME A PRINCE CHARMING

BOOK 01

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EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# Rebirth: How A Loser Became A Prince Charming

(重生之抠脚大汉变男神)

by

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# Synopsis

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Qin Guan was reborn and sent back to his final semester in High School 18 years ago.

Getting a second chance at life, he works hard to turn things around and eventually become a Prince Charming.

What will his life be like the second time around? What will he have to go through?

How will he succeed in turning from a loser into a Prince Charming?

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# Chapter 1: Eighteen Again

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Qin Guan was reborn and sent back eighteen years in time.

He was having a pancake at the dining table when he realized what had happened. He was so shocked, and the scallion pancake his mom had made for him was so resilient that small pieces landed on his face as he tore at it with vigor.

A scallion escaped and landed on his hair, the sauce splattering right in his nostrils.

Qin Guan's dad, who was sitting across from him at the table, glanced at him calmly and turned a page on the newspaper that stood between them like usual.

His dad looked really young. He had few wrinkles on his face as he was just over 40, the very prime of his life. He was reading a newspaper while eating. He seemed really good at multitasking, unlike 18 years later when he would have poked himself in the face with his chopsticks if he'd tried to do the same thing.

Qin Guan touched the sauce on his face and looked at the dishes on the table. There was fried oyster, shredded cucumber and millet congee. He turned towards his mom, who was making pancakes in the kitchen. He thought that she still looked attractive.

Qin Guan got up and walked to the bathroom. He turned on the tap and washed his face by the sink. When he'd cleaned all the sauce off, he thought to himself, "Take things as they come. That's

the spirit.”

Lifting his head, Qin Guan grabbed a towel off the shelf. He chanced a glimpse at the mirror and lowered his head, then raised it back up.

“Oh my God! Who is that?”

In the mirror, there was a man with thin rosy lips, pretty white teeth, and a Roman nose. If he ignored the scallion on his hair, he looked like a complete toy boy. No, a lady-killer.

Qin Guan grinned, and the man in the mirror smiled as well, revealing his bright white teeth. Qin Guan looked in the mirror and removed the scallion from his hair. He looked around, and then put his hands down his blue-and-white school trousers and touched his penis. “There it is! Good, I’m still a man.”

Qin Guan had always had more male hormones than most people. At 18, he already had whiskers on his face.

Thanks to his stubble, pot belly, his chest and leg hair, the fact that he wore a vest and shorts, and of course his favorite pastime of watching TV with his legs spreading wide, Qin Guan looked like the very definition of a sloppy guy.

Now his body had changed, and Qin Guan, who was just beginning to accept that he had been reborn, was confused once again.

“Was I reborn or did I travel through time? How come my appearance has changed?”

Before Qin Guan could think it over, his mom’s voice rang out through the house.

“Qin Guan, are you full? You’re going to be late for class!”

Qin Guan was aware that 18 years ago he had still been in high school. He popped his head out and took a look at the calendar in the living room. It was March, 1998. Jesus, it was only several months before the College Entrance Examination!

Qin Guan hastily toweled his face and ran to his bedroom. He grabbed his schoolbag and swept all the test papers that had been on his desk inside it.

Snatching his bike key off the desk, he walked into the living room, picked up the rest of his pancake and shoved it into his mouth, lisping, “Mom, I’m out.”

He put on his green cotton jacket and ran down the stairs.

Qin Guan reached the entrance of the building and got on his bike. It was an old 28-inch-diameter that made all kinds of noise but had a nonfunctional bell.

As he headed to school, he finished the rest of his pancake and thought to himself, “What were the questions on the College Entrance Examination? I can’t remember. Forget it. Should I ask Zhou Jing to come play a video game? Yes, definitely.”

Wow, did it feel good to be young.

Qin Guan’s high school was one of the best in the province. The campus was swarming with straight-A students.

Qin Guan had taken a lot of blows since enrolling there. He had gradually gotten used to it, but with so many straight-A students around, former straight-F students had to work extra hard. However, thanks to their influence, Qin Guan had managed to get accepted into a respectable technical college.

Although he would have to go through the suffering of the College Entrance Examination one more time, Qin Guan did not feel stressed at all. He would just follow the steps of the straight-A students like last time. He would need to change his major, though. There were hardly any cute girls at technical colleges, a fact that Qin Guan had always complained about before his rebirth.

Riding over another slope, Qin Ran could finally see the school gate. There were more students on the road, all in blue-and-white or red-and-white uniforms. Panting for breath, Qin Guan stopped at the base of the slope. He wheeled his bike up with one hand, while he used his other hand to push the last piece of pancake into his mouth.



If there was anything bad about his rebirth, it was his physique. He might be taller, but he was rather thin. Looking at his small ribs, Qin Guan let out a sigh. He decided his priority would be to work out.

Qin Guan was wheeling the bike forward when he passed by a group of girls. The girls giggled and ran alongside him for several steps.

One of the girls looked back and whispered to the girl next to her, “Wow, he looks so cute, even while eating a pancake!”

The other girl whispered back, “The school hunk? I sure envy that pancake!”

Qin Guan listened in. He was so surprised to hear the word pancake that he nearly spat out the sauce before swallowing it. From what he remembered, high school girls were quite shy. How come they suddenly wanted to switch places with a pancake?

When the girls walked away, Qin Guan wheeled his bike forward and entered the campus. He went to the bike shed, locked his bike and walked into the teaching building.

Qin Guan went to the third floor, into Class 8, Grade 3, and found his seat. It was the one by the window, in the second row from the back. He knew his way around well, so he reached his seat fast and dropped his schoolbag on the desk. How good it felt to relive that!

In less than five minutes, the bell rang. Watching the head teacher come in, Qin Guan felt his eyes water. He had not seen her in years, but the elderly lady was still as plump as ever.

Qin Guan took a look at the seat behind him. It was empty. Zhou Jing, who always sat in the back row, was late again. As Qin Guan was thinking about him, a tall boy rushed through the door and bumped right into the head teacher.

The teacher saw it was Zhou Jing and started yelling at him, “You’re late again, Zhou Jing! How many times have you been late? You know the rule, go stand in the corner!”

Zhou Jing did not say anything. He left his schoolbag in his seat and went to stand in the corner. Under the guidance of the head teacher, the straight-A students started their routine morning self-study. When the teacher was not looking his way, Qin Guan twisted his head back, pouted his lips at Zhou Jing and whispered, “Did you stay up late last night reading about martial arts and chivalry fiction?”

Zhou Jing looked shocked that Qin Guan would initiate a conversation with him. Stuttering, he answered, “Are you talking to me?”

Qin Guan felt confused.

“Yes,” he said.

Zhou Jing sniffled and said, “You’ve been buried in books for the past three years. You’re always ashamed to be seen with straight-F students like me, because you think we’ll damage your image and reputation. Now you’re talking to me first. Did the sun rise in the west today? Maybe it does once in a blue moon!”

Qin Guan felt horrible. How the hell had this version of Qin Guan behaved at school before his rebirth?

The way Zhou Jing had described him chilled Qin Guan to the bone. He turned to Zhou Jing again and said, “I had a brain fade for two and a half years, but now I’m feeling better. I’ll make it up to you. Let’s go to an arcade this weekend.”

Zhou Jing looked excited. “I’ll take your word for it. Your treat, though,” he added quickly.

Qin Guan grinned and formed the victory sign with his fingers before turning back to his book.

## Chapter 2: Crushing On Cong Nianwei

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English was the first class after their morning self-study.

Qin Guan took out his textbook. “Merlin had tried different ways to make himself roll. Finally, he decided to put two wheels under each of his shoes.”

As Qin Guan read, he gradually started feeling sleepy.

“What am I going to do?”

As a science geek who had worked on the machine manufacturing industry for more than ten years, Qin Guan had always felt extremely distressed during English class.

While he read the words on the textbook again, he thought that every single one of them sounded familiar, yet he could not remember their meaning. Qin Guan recognized his carelessness in not using English for so many years.

For a science student, the five compulsory subjects in the College Entrance Examination included Math, Physics, Chemistry, English and Chinese. Qin Guan was quite confident in his Math, Physics and Chemistry.

However, Chinese and English were a big pain for him. It had been ten years, and he had forgotten almost everything that he had ever learned. Apparently, in the next few months Qin Guan would

have to focus on Chinese and English in order to learn fast.

Looking at the number 122 on the blackboard, which stood for the days to go before the College Entrance Examination, and watching his classmates work so hard, Qin Guan thought that he should feel really sorry for himself if he did not take advantage of this second opportunity to get admitted into a prestigious university in the capital.

Picking up his book, he started from the first page and began to recite very hard.

English, Chinese, English. No matter what the class was this morning, these two subjects were what he would study on his own. At the end of the day, when he looked up from his desk dizzily, he was amazed.

Just in one morning, he had read eight English texts and recited around 250 words. Thinking back, he found that he had already memorized 230 of them. As for the four ancient Chinese pieces of prose, he was able to recite every word of them. Was this a stroke of luck brought by his rebirth that would always help him along? Qin Guan was thrilled. That was fantastic!

The morning classes were over around noon time. Students in Grade 3 didn't get any breaks. They only got an hour and a half off for lunch. Qin Guan did not want to waste it. He turned his head back, kicked the leg of Zhou Jing's desk and said, "Do you want to ask Fatty Li for handmade noodles?"

Both Zhou Jing and Li Jian, who had just come over, paused.

Was Toy Boy Qin Guan really talking to them?

Other students moving around in the classroom had paused, too. A 5'9" guy with dark skin, a 5'2" plump one, and a tall thin guy like a stick. They made quite the picture.

Qin Guan did not seem to be aware that he was a looker. He dragged along Li Jian, whose body consisted mostly of fat, and told Zhou Jing, "Old Zhao Ramen. My treat."

They passed by all the girls of the class, who were glaring at them as if wanting to say, "These two dare get invited for ramen by the Prince Charming? How I envy them! I want to go with too. What's so special about them and they got so lucky?"

The two boys followed Qin Guan and walked off the campus.

Old Zhao Ramen was a small noodle restaurant by the high school's side entrance. It was known among the students for its affordable and delicious noodles.

As their noodles were getting served, Qin Guan could not wait to pick them up with his chopsticks and suck them into his mouth. Broth, white noodles and red chili oil. Yes, that was heaven.

Watching Qin Guan eat his noodles unrestrainedly, the two boys, who were sitting across from Qin Guan and shoveling noodles into

their mouths, gave him inscrutable looks. As they watched him lift one of his legs onto the rung of the chair and suck his noodles, they could no longer help but be persuaded.

“Qin Guan, we all know that you are upset, but you can’t give up on yourself just because you got rejected. It’s fine if you want to hang out with us, but how could you not care about your image anymore? It’s the only thing you ever talked about.”

Raising his head from his noodle bowl, Qin Guan looked at a loss while he asked, “What rejection? I have not given up on myself.”

His words confirmed Zhou Jing and Li Jian’s suspicions. They both said compassionately, “You told the monitor yesterday that you had fallen for her, but she turned you down.”

Qin Guan spat out his noodles.

“What? I told the monitor that I had fallen for her?”

Zhou Jing and Li Jian nodded sympathetically. Sniffing his nose, Qin Guan thought of their monitor. Her hair was usually pulled into a neat ponytail and her big eyes were always twinkling. Suddenly, he felt very upset.

The one thing that he’d wanted the most, but had not dared do in his last life, he had done in this one and he had failed. Damn! He could not get over it.

For someone as careless as Qin Guan, this second chance at life was not a big deal, neither were the changes in his appearance. That girl with the big eyes, though, was like a dream for him.

Who didn't have one or two friends that they'd had a crush on when they were young? It was fine. He had said it, and he'd gotten rejected.

Looking at the empty bowl in front of him and turning to his two best friends who obviously cared about him, Qin Guan felt moved. He pretended not to care and said, "Crap! How is it even possible to be devastated over a little girl that's still in her puberty? I forgot about it already."

Feeling proud of his words, Qin Guan watched Li Jian wink at him. Qin Guan felt happy. "Such a good friend. Always entertaining me."

Qin Guan got up, pinched Li Jian's cheek and said, "You agree with my theory, too, right? Good boy."

Zhou Jing sighed. Sometimes he worried about Qin Guan's EQ. He poked at him with his finger and pointed behind Qin Guan's back.

Qin Guan twisted his head back. Oh, no... It was the little girl. The monitor was standing right behind him, holding a tray of fried noodles with beef in her hand, her eyes twinkling and looking adorable.



Before Qin Guan could feel good about himself, a tray of fried noodles had landed on his head. The monitor gave him a smile and asked the owner for one more tray of fried noodles. “Who’s a little girl now?”

The owner popped his head out of the window and shouted, “One more tray of fried noodles with beef!”

The patrons in this small noodle restaurant were all students from their high school. They had all witnessed the scene between the Prince Charming and the straight-A girl, and were not planning on keeping it a secret.

Qin Guan was not mad, despite the fact that a mass of noodles hung right on his face. He held it up to his mouth and sucked it in. He had not expected the gentle monitor to turn out to have such a hot temper. He had to have her. He just had to.

Ignoring the noodles on his head, Qin Guan grinned at her. She had such beautiful sparkling eyes.

“I like you more now. What am I going to do?”

Seeing this extremely silly side of Qin Guan, the young monitor thought that he was very down-to-earth after all. Nothing like the hypocrite she’d always thought he was.” For some reason, she blushed.

Flipping her ponytail, she ignored him and went to get her

noodles.

Qin Guan felt happy. He had a chance with her. He would handle the College Entrance Examination first, and then he would handle the prettiest girl in class.

He meant what he had said.

The rest of the months flew by, with Qin Guan giggling towards the monitor from time to time over his books. When he had nothing to do, he would tuck himself into bed, close his eyes and recall bits and pieces of his day.

He was very happy. It felt good to be back in high school. To start his life over and chase after the girl of his dreams... If he won Cong Nianwei's heart, he would not have lived his life in vain.

# Chapter 3: The Days Before The College Entrance Examination

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Qin Guan led a busy life.

Every day before dawn, he would go out and ran several laps around the small park in his neighborhood. If there was anything that Qin Guan was unsatisfied with, it was his weak physique.

He was too thin. Any man who did not have body hair had to at least have some muscles.

Only by exercising more could he get more toned and have a healthy physique. Just because he was sloppy, it did not mean that he could not be physically strong.

Qin Guan's classmates found that he had changed. He was no longer as aloof and unapproachable as he used to be.

After each class, he would ask other straight-A students for help with his homework, not ashamed at all to learn from his inferiors. He had gotten bold, generous and unconstrained, and he was no longer punctilious. Everyone thought that under his arrogance Qin Guan had a kind heart that enjoyed life to the full.

Without realizing it, Qin Guan began getting increasingly popular among his classmates. Boys who had never associated with him before became best friends with him one after the other, more and more girls got closer to him, and of course, he kept getting an

increasing number of contemptuous looks from Cong Nianwei. But why did he feel so happy?

More than three months flew by in this manner.

The exam period came. Through multiple inquiries and investigations, Qin Guan had discovered that Cong Nianwei had given up on the college recommendation of the school and would take the College Entrance Examination, aiming for Tsinghua University in the capital.

He gritted his teeth. With his current progress, he was much better than he used to be in his past life, but he was still a long way from getting admitted into Tsinghua University. If he wanted to keep Cong Nianwei away from other boys, then he would have to take measures. If he could not go to the same university, he had to at least go to the same city!

Since he had always wanted to study finance, Qin Guan aimed for the Capital University of Finance and Economics. It was in the same city, so he would not feel far away from her.

On July 7, 8, and 9, Qin Guan took his exam admission ticket, a 2B pencil and a pencil case filled with pens, and headed bravely to the examination room that would determine his future.

The first exam was Chinese. His focused learning over the past few months had played a decisive role. He found that 98% of the multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions were on things that he had learned. He had no difficulty answering them.

His textbook knowledge was imprinted on his mind. He could remember it all clearly. It was not difficult for him at all. The reading part was quite easy as he answered the questions with standard practice. The writing part was even easier, because that's when Qin Guan played his trump card— he cheated through his memory.

More than ten years had passed. Qin Guan had long forgotten the questions on the examination papers, but he could still remember the topic of the writing part. Qin Guan turned his examination paper to the last page and read the topic:

Tenacity: A Quality to Pursue

Overcoming Vulnerability (Alternative Topic)

Qin Guan was ecstatic. He had guessed right. The Chinese writing topic of the College Entrance Examination had not changed. He felt reassured. He had answered all the questions on the Chinese examination paper, and there was still more than 30 minutes left.

Qin Guan checked his paper carefully, and when there was still fifteen minutes to go before the end of the examination, he submitted his paper and walked out of the examination room.

The Chinese exam was a really good start to Qin Guan's College Entrance Examination, which meant that he would now be more confident when taking the rest of the subjects.

Math, Physics, Chemistry, none of them could stop Qin Guan. When he had written the last word on the English writing exam, his hand, which was still holding his pen, trembled slightly. It was over. He had finished this battle that could determine his future, and he was both happy and excited!

The scorching heat of July could not diminish Qin Guan's happiness. "I did really well. Do you know that, Cong Nianwei? I like you so much. I want to see you again!"

Qin Guan submitted his examination paper, ran out of the campus and spotted the girl with the big eyes who was leaving through the school gate. Qin Guan waved wildly at her and shouted, "Cong Nianwei, what are your plans for this summer?"

As soon as Cong Nianwei walked out of the examination room, she saw a tall thin boy with white skin standing on the other side of the road. He was waving at her under the scorching sun.

The sunshine shone down on the boy's face making his sweat glisten. He was grinning rather unattractively, showing his white teeth, but Cong Nianwei felt that nothing in the whole wide world could hold a candle to him.

Qin Guan was surrounded by boys who were making fun of him, but the girls across the road looked really jealous. In that moment, Qin Guan felt time stand still and all sound disappear. All he saw was Cong Nianwei slowly walking towards him.

She crossed the road and went up to Qin Guan. Looking at his mouth, she said, “I will go back to my grandma’s this summer. But next year, I’ll be waiting to see you and give you an answer.”

Qin Guan felt his heart beat fast, as if a flower were growing in it, bright and beautiful. For some reason, he was moved. “Okay,” he answered slowly, “This time next year, no matter where you are, I will come find you.”

Qin Guan said goodbye to her and went back home in a daze. Watching their absent-minded son, his parents assumed that he had not done very well in his College Entrance Examination. They were too afraid to ask him about it though, in case he became even more upset.

Instead, they decided to comfort him in a more subdued and mild manner. Qin Guan did not explain anything to them. He had already forgotten about the College Entrance Examination and had begun to fantasize about his future. In his heart, he had a dream.

He would need to take good care of himself to get the girl of his dreams, and then convince her to marry him. They would have a few kids together, and keep them close. He would live a happy life with them and earn a lot of money.

## Chapter 4: Graduation Party

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It was late July when the students could finally check out their examination results. Under the gaze of the whole family, Qin Guan's mother tremblingly dialed the last digit.

A mechanical voice rang out from the receiver: Register Number 3799... Score: 689. She had gotten through on the first try.

Lest they should have misheard the score, Qin Guan's mother hang up and dialed the number again: 689. It was true.

Qin Guan's first choice was Capital University of Finance and Economics. No doubt he had surpassed the minimum admission score.

Qian Guan's parents were overjoyed. They had thought that Qin Guan had failed the College Entrance Examination, and it had turned out to be a big surprise for them. They were more than thrilled.

Qin Guan's parents were proud to spread the news right away, wishing to let all their friends and relatives know.

Qin Guan became the most annoying kid in the family. He was both handsome and studious, so all his relatives' kids were gnashing their teeth at how unfair it was.

When the results of the College Entrance Examination came out,



it was quite natural that some people would be happy while others would be sad.

The College Entrance Examination was not such a big deal for Class 8, Grade 3 which was full of straight-A students. When Qin Guan went back to school to submit his college application, he met with his head teacher who informed him of the date and time of their graduation party.

On the day of the party, everyone in class showed up. They were all dressed casually instead of wearing their school uniforms. Now that the tense atmosphere of the College Entrance Examination was gone, everyone could enjoy themselves, fool around, drink and eat.

Li Jian produced two boxes of beer out of nowhere and poured a glass out for everyone. He saw all these straight-A students with their thick glasses staring at the beer, their eyes showing that they all clearly itched to have a glass.

Qin Guan suddenly understood why people with super high IQs were always described as devious, secretly cunning and wickedly smart.

After drinking three glasses of beer, the Class President, who was the one wearing the thickest glasses, suddenly slapped his glass on the table. His blurred vision and flushed face betrayed how drunk he was.

Qin Guan thought he was about to witness the most honest

student in class make a drunken fool of himself when suddenly the Class President started accusing him, “Damn you, Qin Guan! I hate you the most out of the whole class!” Hearing his loud voice, everyone went quiet all of a sudden. “What did you have going for you in the past besides your good looks? You were an absolute unsociable hypocrite and your grades were below average. You were just a hypocritical bastard. But despite that, you were still recognized as the school hunk. You even dared tell Cong Nianwei that you liked her, which made me hate you even more...”

The Class President stuttered. He got increasingly emotional until he somehow ended up crying.

Despite the snot and tears on his face, the Class President went on, “But how can you do this? Couldn’t you just stay true to your old ways? Why did you have to get funnier and funnier? Now our classmates have started to talk to you. Your performance has been getting better, and the teachers also seem to like you. But even so, I can’t give up! Cong Nianwei, I like you too. I like you more than he does. Qin Guan, I hate you!”

By now everyone was looking at the most honest student in class crying at the wine table.

Qin Guan believed that this was a typical case of alcohol making a coward temporarily brave. He was about to start laughing when voices began to ring out all around him.

“Wang Ping, it was me who wrote you that love letter in Grade 2. I like you,” said Bu Lu, who sat in the first row.

“Qu Mei, I have been taking advantage of your weakness for three years. You know what I’m talking about.”

Qu Mei pretended convincingly that she didn't know what he was talking about.

The head teacher was like an old monk during meditation. He ate and drank as if nothing of importance was going on, completely ignoring all these crazy boys.

The girls all remained very calm. The eight boys who had spoken with Dutch courage ended up feeling like cowards instead and retreated like scared birds. It got strangely quiet in the room.

Suddenly there were glasses clanging and tinkling, and the Vice President stood up. She was so emotional that she knocked over her own chair. She was a slender girl with fair skin. Lots of boys in class had a crush on her.

She puckered her lips and picked up her chair. Before everyone’s eyes, she suddenly approached Qin Guan, clutched his shoulders and kissed his cheek. Then she returned to her seat as if nothing had happened.

The room had gotten even quieter. Qin Guan looked around and all he saw was ferocious stares. He was about to say something when he saw eight girls stand up and start to bombard the Vice President with words.

“You’re so cunning!”

“That’s right! You should have warned us before you did that!”

“I had wanted to do this for such a long time, and now you stole my thunder!”

The girls quickly ran over to Qin Guan. Some grabbed his hair while others tore at his clothes. They each gave him a kiss on the cheek.

Qin Guan quickly slipped under the table.

The head teacher glanced at the dishes on it. “Ah, the braised intestines with brown sauce taste really good at this restaurant.”

The girls did not let go. They started tearing at Qin Guan’s clothes to claim him for themselves.

Peeping through the table legs, Qin Guan saw Cong Nianwei looking at him angrily.

He was about to sit up when fists started beating on his head like raindrops. It was the boys.

“Beat him. I can’t stand it anymore.”

“Give my girl back! I’ll fight you to the end!”

All at once, dishes, beer glasses, roast chicken and vegetables came his way.

An increasing number boys and girls surrounded Qin Guan.

“Sir, take a picture for us.”

“Yes. A group photo,” they told the head teacher, who did not seem disturbed and remained focused on his food.

The head teacher wiped his mouth and took a Seagull SLR camera out of his bag. He zoomed in a quite professional manner before shouting to his students, “Over here! One, two, three!”

Time stood still right then and there. The girls were inside it and the boys were outside. They were all either beating or dragging the boy under the table, and he was trying hard to lift up his head, grinning wide and bright.

“From this day on, my classmates will start drifting apart and our best and most innocent time will be over. I wish all my high school classmates academic success and a smooth journey in life.”

# Chapter 5: The Moneymaking Barbecue Stand

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It was the end of July and the weather had been getting increasingly hot. Cicadas were singing merrily outside the windows.

Qin Guan was lounging in a chair, his face buried in a watermelon. He was thinking about his life and how he would make a living.

When it came to making money, Qin Guan was at a loss. He had been an engineering student in his past life, and every day he'd had to deal with excavators, battering rams and road rollers.

Now that he had been reborn though, he did not want to carry on with his old business. However, he could not recall any winning lottery numbers, nor did he know anything about the stock market. What else could he do?

“Others would have acted more boldly given the chance to be reborn. I have been very cautious.”

Qin Guan sighed. Even though he had the opportunity to start over, he was not able to make money in an easy, smart way.

He spat out the watermelon seeds filling his mouth. He went out in a pair of flip-flops, heading to the foundry where his cousin worked. He wanted to ask him to make him a barbecue cart using

waste sheet iron.

Walking out of the foundry, Qin Guan realized that he would need help. He called Zhou Jing and Li Jian from the small grocery store next to the foundry. These two boys had no goals in their lives. They already knew that they had barely passed the minimum score for admission into a respectable college in the College Entrance Examination. One of them stayed at home, bored, with little to do except eat and sleep; and the other read smut, trying to catch up on all the chapters he had missed during the College Entrance Examination period. Listening to Qin Guan's plan on the phone, the two boys could not bear to stay at home anymore. They all agreed to meet in the farmers' market.

Holding two chemical fertilizer sacks with the word "urea" on them, the three boys bargained heatedly with the owner. In the end, they bought two wholesale sacks of charcoal and hundreds of bamboo sticks that they planned to use as skewers.

Li Jian asked the elder niece of his mother's elder aunt's younger cousin to help them set up a stall at the night market, and Zhou Jing brought some tables and short stools from the recreation room of the Bureau of Retired Officials where his father worked.

The three boys had put together all their pocket money to buy all those things, but they still had more than 300 yuan left. That meant that they could also afford to buy the ingredients. Everything was ready except for the barbecue cart.

Qin Guan's cousin was very efficient. He delivered the cart to Qin Guan in less than three days. Qin Guan's parents were staring at

their son as if he was a monkey, but Qin Guan calmly fastened the cart, ready to start work the next day.

The iron cart was equipped with a brazier where one could make fried noodles by lowering the iron plate, and on its right side there was space for hanging a coal stove where one could fry kebabs using an oil pan.

It could match any modern multi-functional automatic barbecue cart.

Everything was ready.

The next day, at four o'clock in the morning, Qin Guan borrowed a tricycle from the factory his mother worked at and rode to the market.

Chicken, pork, mutton, all of these were must-haves. Garlic, chili, onion and potatoes were also essential for roasted dishes. "There are even wholesale cold noodles! Great. We also need cooking oil and seasonings."

Qin Guan bought a tricycle worth of groceries. By the time he was done, he had very little money left.

It was already after seven when Qin Guan struggled to ride the tricycle successfully back home.

He proudly called Zhou Jing and Li Jian to wake them up and ask



them to come and help.

When Zhou Jing and Li Jian showed up at Qin Guan's home with a case of bed head, Qin Guan had already taken the ingredients out from the bags and put them in large bowls.

Looking at a living room full of ingredients, Zhou Jing said anxiously, "Who can handle the meat? I've never been inside a kitchen." Hearing this, Qin Guan felt very self-satisfied. As a sloppy bachelor for years, he'd had to cook so he wouldn't have to eat instant noodles every day.

Qin Guan shook his head complacently and began to assign tasks, "Zhou Jing, you distribute the ingredients, and skewer the meat and vegetables. Li Jian, you come and help me." Then he rolled up his sleeves and walked into the kitchen.

Qin Guan laid a piece of mutton on the chopping board. The kitchen knife danced in the air as the mutton was sliced into small strips, stacked neatly on the board.

Qin Guan put the sliced mutton into an iron bowl, saying loudly: "Ready!"

Then Zhou Jing and Li Jian began the first step of their business: skewering the meat.

In just one morning, the three boys made several hundred kebabs and put them away pack by pack. As long as they managed to clean

and cut the vegetables in the afternoon, they would be ready to start their business.

After lunch, they packed everything up and lied down haphazardly on Qin Guan's small bed.

Qin Guan said bitterly, "Others make money with no effort at all. Why do we have to be so miserable?"

Li Jian stated the obvious, "We're useless high school graduates. Some would say we're not even strong enough for manual work. And now we have our own barbecue stand. That's already amazing. I told our other classmates from high school and they were so jealous."

Qin Guan quietly wiped his tears. "It's because you've never read stories about rebirth. People lead lavish lives after being reborn! They have good friends and date beautiful girls. They leave their remote villages to become businessmen. They start up their own companies, buy shares in the stock market and invest in venture capital."

But he himself was tired like a dog just by setting up a stand, and he had even gotten rejected by the girl he liked. Why was his life so different from others'?

Qin Guan got up. As a strand of hair hung down his face, he realized that he had not cut his hair since the College Entrance Examination and it had gotten rather long.

Qin Guan kicked the two boys on the bed and said, “Let’s go to my cousin’s and have a haircut. We’re now businessmen. We have to pay attention to our image.”

Qin Guan’s cousin was 20 years old. She was a senior hairdresser at a new hair salon downtown, and was trying to learn the latest hairdressing trends in Guangdong Province.

The three boys strolled into the hair salon. There were few people there in the afternoon. Qin Guan’s cousin planned to practice her skills on his hair.

Zhou Jing and Li Jian sat behind his chair and watched Qin Guan’s cousin move the scissors up and down. They took a glance at Qin Guan and found that he was very handsome with his new hairstyle. He would definitely make all his friends jealous.

Suddenly, they heard Qin Guan’s cousin scream, “Whoops, my hands slipped!” Then they saw Qin Guan’s scalp.

“Ha ha!” Instantly the two boys felt satisfied. It was like Buddha himself had granted their wish.

Qin Guan’s cousin tried to correct her mistake, but it only got worse. She did not stop until it was obvious that the hair could not be salvaged.

Qin Guan flicked his hair and looked at his choppy hairstyle in the mirror. It was so uneven that he could not even bear to look at

it. Moments ago it had been too long, and now it was all gone. Instead, he had a silly buzzcut that was missing two spots for technical reasons.

He had turned from a Prince Charming into a woodlouse in mere seconds.

All day long, Zhou Jing and Li Jian could not help laughing at Qin Guan, even while he set up the stand in the night market.

Zhou Jing and Li Jian kept laughing while they unloaded kebabs and took vegetables down from the cart. Qin Guan did not care. He grinned and rubbed his short hair.

“Well, this sure must feel cool in the summer.”

Qin Guan lit the charcoals in the brazier, put the oil pan on top of it and prepared the iron plate. It was almost dark and the lights in the night market were on.

More and more people flocked there to have a fun summer night.

Qin Guan took out several kebabs and roasted them on the fire.

Oil dripped onto the burning iron plate from the newly bought mutton, producing puffs of smoke and giving off a sweet smell.

In just a few minutes, several people were already approaching

the stand.

“New stand. Let’s try it. Ten mutton kebabs, ten pork kebabs, and two lamb kidneys, please.”

“Wow, there’re even cold noodles! Two more bowls of cold noodles. For here, please.”

The three boys got busy right away.

Qin Guan was in charge of roasting, frying and stirring, Zhou Jing made the cold noodles, and Li Jian cleaned up the stand and served the food and drinks.

As it got darker, business got even better. The three boys were kept busy. They saw customers come and go, and when they finally paused for breath, they realized that it was already late night.

There were fewer and fewer people on the street. Other vendors around them started to pack up to call it a day.

After they cleaned up the last table, the three boys sank down on the stools.

Qin Guan shook the metal bucket that held the beer and filled three glasses. He took one glass and drank it up.

The other two boys emptied their glasses in one gulp as well and

belched contentedly. Then they all turned their attention to the moneybag around Qin Guan's waist.

Qin Guan looked around, took out a big pile of change from the bag, and counted it out with them.

There were over 600 yuan in total. If they deducted the cost, they had earned 300 yuan in one night.

Looking at the big pile of money in front of them, they all gasped in excitement. Their fatigue was suddenly gone.

In 1998, the average salary was around 800 yuan. Now each of them could earn that much in little more than a week.

Qin Guan shook his head. He looked at the two excited boys who were cleaning up the stand and wondered whether he could make sufficient money before the new school term started to get the things he wanted. One of them was a cell phone. The newly released Nokia 5110 looked pretty good. Although it was a bit big, it would look nice in a colored case. The second thing he wanted was a computer. He had to buy one because he would be going to college. The cheapest laptop cost more than 8,000 yuan. It seemed that he could only afford a desktop.

As he rode the tricycle home under the myriads of stars in the sky, Qin Guan thought about his future business and let out a sigh. He had to work hard. He still had a long way to go.

# Chapter 6: A Prince Charming With A Choppy Hairstyle

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Qin Guan had been running his business at the night market for eight days. More and more customers visited his stand, and the three boys had their hands full.

They were too busy to notice how weird their customers behaved.

The stand attracted an increasing number girls. It was a common occurrence for a group of female students to hang out by their stand and drool all over Qin Guan while they had some food. The reason was simple. The day that Qin Guan had started his business, a female student had visited the night market to buy some draft beer for her father, and she had seen this cute boy selling barbecue. She had taken a closer look and recognized him right away.

“Gee, isn’t that the hunk from my high school?”

She had been staring at him for years from a distance, and now she was only half a meter away from him. It was like a dream come true for her.

The girl held onto the plastic bag with the draft beer while she stood by the barbecue stand, staring at Qin Guan to her heart’s content. Her father had hot beer for the first time that night.

When she arrived at home, the girl was still exhilarated. Wanting

to share her happiness, she called dozens of her girlfriends to brag about her story of seeing the Prince Charming, which was not going to remain a secret for much longer.

That was how the news had spread. Now every student in the neighborhood knew that the graduate Prince Charming was running a stand in the night market.

Those who lived near the market came to buy barbecue and take a look. They believed that if they didn't go, they would never get to see the Prince Charming again considering he had already graduated.

The small stand was swarming with girls every day. The Prince Charming still looked cute despite his choppy hairstyle.

When the girls saw that his new hairstyle could do nothing to undermine Qin Guan's good looks, they all agreed that he definitely had to be the cutest school boy in all high school history.

Many years later, when junior girls would look at some boy on their cell phone screens and say that he was really cute, older girls would eye the boy critically and say, "I bet he wouldn't still look that cute with a choppy hairstyle. Our high school Prince Charming was way cuter. You must have heard of Qin Guan, blah blah..."

Qin Guan's moneymaking business ended in very a peculiar way.



A few days before the new school term, Qin Guan lended his barbecue cart to his cousin to help him earn some extra money on the weekends.

Zhou Jing and Li Jian came over to Qin Guan's house very early to split their profits. They put all their profits of the past month together and carefully counted the money. They were surprised to find out that each of them would get more than 2,000 yuan.

Two thousand yuan was a fortune for any student in 1998.

Zhou Jing and Li Jian were jumping up and down in excitement, but Qin Guan let out a sign.

That money was not enough to buy him a good computer. But considering the fact that computers still ran on Windows 95, Qin Guan felt relieved. He was going to ask his parents to help him buy a cell phone.

On August 29, 1998 was the Chinese Valentine's Day.

It was a sunny Saturday, and Qin Guan's parents stuffed the last piece of clothing into their bulging baggage before they went shopping for Qin Guan's first cell phone.

They arrived at the Zhenhua Commercial Building, the largest shopping mall in the whole city. At that time, the cell phone counter on the first floor was considered an absolute luxury.

Qin Guan knew his way around very well, so he led his parents to the counter. There were few famous cell phone brands in China back in 1998. Nokia, Motorola, Siemens, Ericsson and Mitsubishi. These were all the brands that were available, and they cost quite a lot. Qin Guan and his parents observed every model carefully, but in the end, Qin Guan still decided to buy the Nokia 5110. It had a long standby time, a bright color, and was so shockproof it could even serve as a weapon when necessary.

Taking out the red envelope with the money his parents had given him plus the money he had earned working at the night market, Qin Guan paid over 5000 yuan for a blue Nokia 5110.

Customers in the mall were surprised that the couple would be willing to buy their son such an expensive cell phone when Qin Guan's mother began to brag, "Well, my son was admitted into the Capital University of Finance and Economics, blah blah... He earned this cell phone through his own hard work during the summer, blah blah."

Under the admiring gaze of everyone, she was shoved out of the mall by Qin Guan's father.

On August 29, Qin Guan and his parents dragged their luggage to the train station and got on the train heading to the capital.

After one night's journey, they arrived safely at the Beijing Station on the next day around noon.

Qin Guan arrived at his university on Sunday, which was peak

time for freshmen registration. Qin Guan's parents went to the Dean's Office to pay the tuition fees while Qin Guan forced his way to the Student Reception Center to inquire about his dormitory.

When Qin Guan and his parents met up again, they were all sweaty and out of breath.

Together, they headed to Qin Guan's dorm. Qin Guan put his luggage on his bed while his mother automatically started unpacking. She made the bed, hang up a mosquito net, dusted the closet and set the table. In less than an hour, she had cleaned up the whole room and put everything away.

Looking at the compact dorm room, Qin Guan realized that this was where his battle would begin.

There were six beds in total, three upper and three lower, a wall-mounted TV, a long table, three stools and six metal lockers stacked together, all in pristine 1990s style.

Qin Guan's bed was the lower one nearest to the door. Mounted on the wall beside it was a telephone. It seemed that he could not open the door and answer the phone at the same time.

Except for the upper bunk above his bed, all the other beds were filled with stuff. Clearly his roommates had checked in earlier.

Qin Guan's parents looked at the dorm furniture, feeling rather satisfied with the place their son would live from now on.

When he had finished unpacking, Qin Guan decided to visit the restaurant. He would then find a hotel for his parents, and buy a washbasin, a thermos and other essential items.

After Qin Guan had made a hotel reservation for his parents, he returned to his dorm, which was now packed with people. Before Qin Guan could greet anyone, the door was opened again.

Amid clanking and jingling, eight people streamed inside the room. A little boy standing in the middle of the group was shoved inside.

A fashionably dressed woman was the first to approach the empty bed. She touched the bed beam and frowned slightly. Then she took a look at the closet.

The dorm was fully packed. Qin Guan was pushed to the side, but he didn't feel annoyed. He dragged out a stool from behind a table and sat down to watch along with everybody else.

The woman was giving out instructions. Some people started unpacking the baggage while others began making the bed. She turned to the little boy behind her and said, "Is there nothing good here? Six people have to share one room, and look at how narrow the bed is! You've never left home, never even helped with any chores. You're still a kid. Our home is around here, so how about I go and apply for commuting for you?"

The little boy, who was undoubtedly a tsundere, was thinking to

himself: “I’m old enough now! How could you say this in front of everyone? I want to die of embarrassment.” He yelled at his mother, “I’m already 16! I’m a college student! You’re driving me nuts! I can handle it by myself!”

“How can you not understand? I’m doing this for your own good. Now I feel terrible,” the little boy’s mother was thinking to herself. Out loud she said, “Okay, calm down. As long as you like it, I’ll be fine.” Then she turned to a woman who looked like a nanny and said, “Hurry up! Put away the clothes and clean the bedstead.”

While he looked on, Qin Guan started to introduce himself to his other roommates.

The boy who slept on the upper bunk near the window was Mu Lejiang from Northwest China, and right under his bed was Ye Dong from Northeast China. Both boys were majoring in International Trade.

Qin Guan liked Mu Lejiang and Ye Dong from the moment he met them. They both had a robust physique and sparse stubble, and appeared to be hearty laughers. Qin Guan knew that they were his kind of people. Only sloppy guys with a lot of body hair were real men.

The two boys whose beds were opposite Qin Guan’s appeared quite gentle. The lower bunk belonged to Wang Lei from the Water Towns of Southern Yangtze River, who wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses and had a soft voice. He and Qin Guan were in the same Accounting class.

The upper bunk belonged to Li Jie, a Cantonese boy from the Department of Economics and Management. Short though he was, he seemed capable and smart.

The three boys were talking animatedly when they saw that all the little boy's stuff had been cleaned up.

The boy's mother came over and told Qin Guan, "Oh, so you're another one of Xiaoyang's schoolmates. You must have been admitted to the Beijing Film Academy."

The little boy's mother held Qin Guan's hands and observed him for quite a while. Qin Guan felt puzzled. Behind him, Wang Lei could not help laughing out loud.

Perhaps feeling that she had gone a bit too far, the boy's mother hastily let go of Qin Guan's hands. She dragged the little boy to the front and said, "Xiaoyang is younger than you. Since you will all be living in the same dorm, would you please help take care of him and forgive him any mistakes he makes?"

Even the most careless of parents loved and planned for their kids.

Xiaoyang's roommates all promised her politely. Then Xiaoyang insisted that his family leave. When they did, Xiaoyang sank onto a stool and wiped his sweat, saying, "I'm Liu Xiaoyang from Beijing. I turned sixteen this year."

Liu Xiaoyang was truly younger than his roommates. He was fairly smug because he had been skipping grades since primary school, and he was currently majoring in Finance at the Capital University of Finance and Economics. Apparently his goal was to become a part of the social elite.

Their dorm consisted of two sloppy guys, an aspiring socialite, two gentlemen, and a sloppy handsome boy. They were all easy-going and quickly felt right at home with each other after spending some time talking and laughing. Noticing that it was almost dark, the six boys decided to have their first dinner party.

# Chapter 7: Buying A House In Beijing

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Qin Guan went out of his dorm. He was planning on buying an EasyOwn phone number at the convenience store downstairs. Only when he got to the store did he realize what year it was. At that date in time, phone numbers were sold on consignment, not at such small stores.

To buy a phone number, he had to register at a China Mobile business hall. Qin Guan let out a sigh.

Having been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Liu Xiaoyang felt frustrated. How could he forget to buy a cellphone? It would make his life much more convenient.

Qin Guan called his parents from a public telephone and told them that everything was settled and there was nothing to worry about. He said he would sleep in his dorm that night and visit the hotel the next morning.

Qin Guan's roommates had already decided where to have dinner before Qin Guan had finished his call. Diagonally across their university, there was a street where many roadside snack booths were located. It was a good place to have barbecue. They went to the street and found that the booths had just been set up. There were various kinds of food, including kebab, cold noodles, boiled pork giblets with baked wheaten paste, and beef noodles. The boys went up to a kebab booth and ordered 100 kebabs and five draft beers. Liu Xiaoyang was not allowed to have draft beer because he was still underage, so he did not have to bring his ID card.



Liu Xiaoyang wanted to have some beer, but his protests were suppressed by his roommates. While they were waiting for their kebabs to be served, Ye Dong and Mu Lejiang took out two packs of cigars from their pockets and passed them to their other three roommates, ignoring Liu Xiaoyang. Feeling left out again, Liu Xiaoyang started to get pissed off. He yelled, “What about me? Why can’t I have one?” Ye Dong glanced at him scornfully and said, “Grow some pubes first.”

Qin Guan spat out his beer with a puff. “This one’s certainly got a personality! I like that!” Qin Guan and Wang Lei declined the cigars, but Li Jie took one.

Ye Dong took a deep drag on his cigar. He was suddenly touched out of nowhere and said, “You won’t believe it, but I was actually a poor student. I was very naughty in junior high school. I never studied hard and I was always getting into fights with others. All bad boys would smoke at the time. Later on, I was disqualified from high school. My dad took two bottles of wine to beg the help of one of his primary school classmates, who happened to be my high school principal. He hoped that I would get to go to high school, even if we had to pay extra money. When he got back home, I cried. F\*ck! He had never begged anyone for help before, but he’d done that for me. At the time, I was thinking that I had to make something out of my life so my dad would never have to beg anyone’s help again.” Ye Dong took another drag and puffed out a smoking ring.

“When I was admitted into this university, my dad had tears in his eyes. Seeing him so happy, I felt that all my hard work in high school had finally paid off.”

The boys did not speak. Their hearts felt heavy. The owner served them their kebabs. Ye Dong pounded his hand on the table and said, “Let’s drop it and have dinner.”

Leaving courtesy aside, each of the boys grabbed a handful of kebabs.

Qin Guan had a bite and found that they were truly yummy. Kebabs and roasted lamb’s kidneys were one of Beijing’s local specialties.

A whole lamb’s kidney was cross cut down the middle and both sides were roasted till they turned brown. Wrapped in thick mutton fat, the kidneys tasted delicious.

The boys were too busy eating to talk. More than 100 kebabs were eaten in a flash.

Qin Guan wondered why Li Jie, a thin little boy from South China, was such a heavy smoker. He asked Li Jie about it.

Li Jie did not mind his asking and he replied, “My family runs a small store and I used to be the keeper. Smoking is a must in business, you know.”

Li Jie’s Mandarin was a big headache for all his roommates. They knew that southerners were bad at learning languages though, so they tried their best to understand his Cantonese Mandarin.

It finally hit Qin Guan that he was actually the most mysterious of his roommates. He was being too deceptive. He just sat down and kept silent, looking like the son of an aristocratic family. His silliness would no longer remain a secret if he behaved or talked normally. It would make for a very funny contrast.

This was the third time Qin Guan had to explain to his roommates that he was really the biological son of his parents, and that there was no chance that he had been abandoned at birth by an aristocratic family. He was at a loss because of his roommates' imagination.

Bonding over food was the best way to build a friendship. After the meal, they began to pal around with each other. In order to get to know each other easier, they lined up by age.

The oldest one was Ye Dong, the wild boy from Northeast China, who was very much like a bandit leader.

The second oldest turned out to be Qin Guan. Although he did not like being the second oldest boy in his dorm, he could do nothing about it. He could not change his age.

The third oldest was Mu Lejiang, a rough boy from Northwest China. He had denied the rumor that kids went to school by camel in his hometown the moment he had met his roommates.

The fourth oldest was Wang Lei, a man of letters from the South of the Yangtze River. Qin Guan found that Wang Lei talked the least, but he looked very smart. Devious was the best word to

describe him.

The fifth oldest was Li Jie, a small shrewd businessman from Guangdong Province, whose ultimate goal was to achieve academic excellence and turn his family-run store into a listed company.

The youngest one was Liu Xiaoyang, a rich tsundere local who was difficult to deal with, indicating that his status in the dorm would be as low as his age rank among his roommates.

After wining and dining, the boys returned to their dorm. They took a quick shower, turned off the lights and went to bed.

Qin Guan lay in his bed in the dark. His thoughts drifted to his past life. By this time, he had been admitted to a technical college. His rough looks had made people think he had retaken his courses many times. Usually, most of the students in a technical college were taciturn boys who were immersed in their own world. Qin Guan had lived in the same dorm for four years, but he had talked very little with his roommates.

Now, he'd been admitted to one of the best universities of finance and economics. Students majoring in finance eventually became articulate, whether they had that inclination or acquired the ability by hard work. Qin Guan had a lot to talk about with his roommates and he believed that was a good start.

The next morning, he got up early according to his timetable. He picked up a towel and went to the washroom.

Yes, it was a washroom. At the time, dorms were not equipped with a private bathroom, so there was a public washroom on every floor.

The row of taps above the long washing sink looked quite spectacular.

Facing the sink, Qin Guan squeezed some toothpaste out and started brushing his teeth. While he brushed, he thought about his plan for the day. His courses would officially begin tomorrow. His parents were staying in Beijing for a very short period of time and would go back home that night.

Qin Guan's plan was quite tight. Thinking of this, he spat the foam out of his mouth. He had to be quick and go meet his parents early.

Qin Guan walked out of the washroom and went back to his dorm. It was quiet there as all his roommates were still asleep. He walked on tiptoe and put away his toiletries. Then he closed the door carefully, went downstairs and headed for the canteen.

Inexpensiveness was the best characteristic of university canteens in 1998. Qin Guan arrived there very early. The senior cooks had hardly opened the sales window when Qin Guan passed his meal ticket to them.

The second canteen was very big. There were two metal buckets in the hall. The workers opened the lid and a blast of hot air floated up. This was the free soup served by the canteen. When

finishing the meal, students could take the ladle and scoop some up for themselves. Qin Guan bought three standard breakfasts: soya-bean milk, deep fried dough sticks and tea-boiled eggs. It only cost him 3.6 yuan in total with a free takeout plastic bag. Qin Guan put his breakfast into the bag and strolled toward the hotel where his parents were staying.

No four-star hotel had yet been built near the Capital University of Finance and Economics. There were only some small bungalows in the area and the hotel where Qin Guan's parents were staying, which was the nearest one to the University. It was humble, but clean enough.

After breakfast, Qin Guan took his parents to Xizhimen, just like they had planned earlier. Seated at the second ring of Beijing, it was only three kilometers away from his University and the first stop of the day.

There were not many cars on the street. Yellow minibuses came and went. You always needed to pay the driver 10 yuan, regardless of the mileage.

They saw no high-rises on both sides of the street. Residential quarters here were all six-storey high. Qin Guan knew his way around well and led his parents to the sales office.

At the time, Beijing was going through an era of a large-scale development. The city's population was not soaring and migrant workers had not swarmed in yet.

People could be allocated a house by their employers and commodity houses were still an unfamiliar concept for them. Beijingers did not want to buy more houses because they already had a free house to live in.

Qin Guan's parents though did not hesitate in buying one. Perhaps it was because they were not locals and owned no house there, but they did not reject Qin Guan's proposal to buy a house near his University.

They took a look at all the houses for sale and excluded high-end flats and prism high-rise buildings out of their purchase plan.

## Chapter 8: Military Training

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In the end, they ruled out all the houses except the ones in the earlier stages of construction, where the workers were still building the foundation, and the first floor had not been built yet. All the sales manager could provide was a drawing of the structure of the houses.

Qin Guan was still thrilled. He knew this residential block would be the best block in the neighborhood. First, it was at a good location, right between the Capital University of Finance and Economics (CUFE) and Xizhimen, and the same distance from the subway and the University. Secondly, the houses there were affordable. Houses under construction were usually less popular than existing ones, and since it was off season, the sales manager promised that they could get a five percent discount off the original price if they paid the deposit on site. Third, with a stroke of luck, Qin Guan knew that this residential block would prove to be the most cost-effective one in the neighborhood, and would be assigned as school district housing.

Houses there cost 1,800 yuan per square meter. Qin Guan picked a two-bedroom apartment facing south, which would allow more sunlight and fresh air in. The building was in the center of the block, away from the street, providing a quiet environment. The seventy-square-meter apartment cost little more than a hundred thousand yuan. Qin Guan felt powerless as his mom spent all their savings on it.

“It’s incredibly cheap! We should buy more! This is really worth it, even if I have to make monthly loan payments.” Whatever he said though, his parents would not agree to him taking out a loan.



“This boy is too naughty! What is he going to do with so many apartments? It’s not like apartments can multiply.” Having hardly ever been in debt, Qin Guan’s parents would never agree to getting a bank loan to buy more apartments.

They felt quite uncomfortable just at the thought of Qin Guan having to borrow money from the government.

With a big smile, the sales manager prepared the house-purchasing contract for them and informed them that they would not get the property deed until the construction was completed.

Undoubtedly, Qin Guan’s name would be on the deed as the owner of the apartment. After all, he was the one who was going to live in Beijing. His parents did not want to come all that way just to help keep the apartment clean for him.

Qin Guan felt a little relieved after signing the contract. Perhaps he would not be the world’s richest man, but he had to at least buy an apartment, otherwise he would be too embarrassed to say that he had been reborn.

Qin Guan’s next plan was to help his parents realize their dream in visiting to Beijing: to visit Tiananmen Square and to go to the busiest shopping street. Qin Guan had inherited his foodie attitude from his parents. After paying tribute to Chairman Mao with them, he took a cab to Hepingmen where Quanjude, the most famous roast duck restaurant, had its headquarters. At the time, Quanjude was such a household name that even little boys from

small towns like Qin Guan's yearned to eat there.

Qin Guan and his parents went to Quanjude and had a duck feast.

The duck there was carefully selected and smoked using special fruitwood. The senior chef skillfully handled the duck and put it in order.

There were pancakes, cucumbers, white onions and roast duck sauce. Qin Guan dipped the duck with the skin into the sauce and held it with a pancake. Adding some sliced onions and cucumbers, he wrapped the pancake up and ate it. He tasted the crisp duck skin, the tender meat and the sweet sauce. What a delicacy it was...

After having a full meal, Qin Guan and his parents moved on to their next stop, Wangfujing.

Wangfujing was home to several old, famous shops, but the goods there were not cost-effective. The shops aimed mainly at tourists.

Qin Guan tried to persuade his mom not to shop there, but he failed, so all he could do was join her in bargaining. Sales assistants in shopping malls were too difficult to deal with, unless one was a self-employed businessman, but Qin Guan decided to give it a shot anyway.

Wangfujing was like a zoo and Qin Guan's bargaining made the owners gnash their teeth. In the end, his mom bought a lot of quality goods at low prices.

She could not stop buying things, and she did even more shopping later in the company of her husband and son.

When Qin Guan saw off his parents at the train station, he realized that they had bought a whole suitcase of souvenirs. Qin Guan's parents felt both worried and relieved. They left Beijing by train as Qin Guan waved them goodbye.

The military training began on September 1st. After a running exercise in the sports stadium, Qin Guan woke up his five roommates, and together they went down to the dining hall to have breakfast.

His roommates were puzzled. They did not know why Qin Guan had woken them up so early to eat. Qin Guan pretended to be wise as he said, "You'll thank me later."

His roommates all gave him the finger and shrugged off his uprightness. After breakfast, they all went to their respective classrooms.

Together, Wang Lei and Qin Guan arrived at the classroom for Class 1 of the Accounting Major. As they walked, Wang Lei suddenly told Qin Guan, "Does that mean that we can't eat during military training?" Qin Guan was impressed by Wang Lei's IQ. He should not have underestimated the boy with the golden glasses.

Qin Wang nodded and replied, "No. But I guess it depends on whether we still have the strength or mood to satisfy our appetite

by then.” Upon hearing that, Wang Lei pushed his glasses up and said, “I’ve got a lot of high-calorie food in my luggage.”

Once again, Qin Guan was impressed by Wang Lei. Feeling deep admiration, Qin Guan walked into the classroom with him.

Their classmates were already there. There were twenty three girls and seven boys in the class.

When the two boys sat down, Qin Guan found himself feeling like a giant among dwarfs. It made sense that the girls would outnumber the boys in an accounting class, but why did all the other boys look so thin and short?

Since the new school term had begun, Qin Guan had grown two centimeters and was now 183 centimeters tall. After exercising for half a term, his muscles had also started to get toned. He was no longer as skinny as he had used to be.

Now he had the proper body fat percentage and sufficient muscles that didn’t make him look too strong or too weak. Combined with his broad shoulders and slim waist, his figure formed a perfect inverted triangle, his narrow hips and long legs making him look like a star.

As he sat in the middle of the classroom, he was like a big lightbulb attracting everyone’s attention. It was not just the girls. The boys also had their eyes focused on him.

They were all gnashing their teeth. They had heard that many girls majored in Accounting, and that was why they had chosen the major themselves. Now that Qin Guan had showed up though, they felt like wolves approaching a flock of sheep, only to find a dragon among them. How could they get along with it? They'd have to set up a trap for it.

Qin Guan was feeling quite uncomfortable with everyone staring at him. Finally, their counselor walked into the classroom and did a roll call. Seeing that everyone in his class was present, he led them to the bus stop near the sports stadium.

The bus moved slowly out of the main entrance, heading for the military training area in the suburbs.

After arriving at the garrison military camp near the border, the counselor handed the troops over to the instructors in charge of the military training. The students were divided into girls and boys and taken away separately.

There were less than ten boys in the Department of Accounting, so the boys from two classes had to be grouped into one team.

The boys and girls were led to their dormitories by their instructors. The moment they put down their luggage, they were forced to go to the sports stadium. Before they could even take a break, their first-day training had begun. They had to remain standing.

Although it was September, there was still a spell of hot weather

in Beijing at the beginning of autumn. As they were exposed to the scorching sun, everyone felt dizzy and sleepy.

When lunchtime came around, Wang Lei understood why Qin Guan had asked them to eat as much as possible in the morning. Being dizzy had made them thirsty and caused them to lose all appetite for food.

Qin Guan bought some food and stuffed it into his mouth desperately. He knew that if he ate nothing, he would be starving in the afternoon.

After a whole day's training, the boys threw themselves onto their beds and started snoring loudly. The first day of their military training was over.

On the second day, their task was to learn how to make their beds. They had to make them as square as tofu. Anyone who failed to do so would be punished. They would get penalty points, but most importantly, they would have to do the cleaning while everyone else was taking a break. No one wanted to have to do that.

The third day's task was official standing training. As the saying goes, the body is the capital of revolution. This was especially true for Qin Guan. While all the boys stood there awkwardly, he was standing straight like a tree. The instructor praised him and nominated him as the acting leader of the team.

By now, Qin Guan's classmates had been convinced that there

was more to him than just his good looks. He was standing there firmly under the scorching sun, a true role model for everyone.

Yet meanwhile, Qin Guan was thinking, “Will the lunch in the canteen still taste as bad? I haven’t washed my underwear in two days.” His mind was wandering aimlessly.

Almost all the instructors got used to inviting this muscular, handsome boy to demonstrate the standard military standing posture for their teams. Qin Guan was like a giant panda on an international show. He was asked by all the instructors to demonstrate the whole day.

Their next training was fierce military boxing. Once again, the instructor was surprised to find that Qin Guan had learned it quickly and could do it perfectly, given only a few instructions.

By a stroke of luck, Qin Guan’s extraordinary memory had helped him do military boxing as perfectly as he had remembered the exam answers. He found that with his amazing memory, he could replay his instructor’s boxing moves in his mind over and over again, so he was able to adjust his body and muscles accordingly. In the end, he could perfectly imitate the instructor’s every move. That was why Qin Guan had done so well in boxing without any difficulty.

The firearms training was the last task for the freshmen, suggesting that the military training was about to end. The army instructor went up to Qin Guan and had a friendly, in-depth conversation with him.

The instructor fully believed that Qin Guan could not achieve his full potential if he studied accounting, and he told him that he was welcome to join the army.

Hearing the man's unreasonable suggestion, Qin Guan's counselor replied calmly, "Only in the entertainment industry could Qin Guan achieve his real potential."

The instructor was suddenly at a loss for words. He had been thoroughly discredited and felt deeply sorry for Qin Guan.

At the end of September, the students returned to the CUFU campus like a group of African refugees.

Qin Guan's skin had not changed too much, except for a slight redness. All the girls were jealous of his fair skin, but they had finally accepted that there were some people that were just born beautiful.

Qin Guan had believed bronze to be the right skin color for a rough man, but the tanning results had proved him wrong. Where was his masculine appearance? His fair skin only made him look like a toy boy.

Qin Guan and his roommates went back to their dorm room. Their new textbooks and meal cards had been handed out, and they were now waiting for the National Day Holiday, knowing that their college life had officially begun.



Everyone got seven days off during the National Day Holiday. Being a Beijinger, Liu Xiaoyang was dragged back home by his mom after he failed to protest.

The hometowns of the other five boys were all too far away from Beijing. Seven days off was not enough time for them to enjoy a good holiday at home since they would have to spend half the holiday travelling.

Qin Guan had bought a used variable speed bicycle before the holiday. He rode the long way to Tsinghua University, hoping to surprise Cong Nianwei, only to find that she was still in the middle of her military training. Disappointed, he rode back to his own campus and got laughed at by his roommates.

Smart as Qin Guan was, when it came to his relationship, he acted like just as big of an idiot as everyone else.

However, depression seldom brought down Qin Guan, who was very careless and insensitive. The National Day Holiday was coming and he had a lot to do. He was not one to remain idle, so he began to put into action his moneymaking plan.

## Chapter 9: The Troublesome Student

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Qin Guan had thought that he could pool the wisdom and help of his roommates for the holiday discussion, but it turned out that they all had their own plans.

Ye Dong, the oldest boy, would be busy with his work at the Students' Union. Recently, he had gotten to know the Secretary of the Liaison Department. As an ambitious young man, Ye Dong was determined to dedicate himself to servicing his university.

Mu Lejiang, the third oldest boy, had already purchased a complete set of field equipment and joined the Camping Society. He was ready to follow the path of his forerunners and travel around China.

Li Jie, the fifth oldest, had made four dinner appointments with his fellow townsmen, planning to set up his own fellow countrymen association.

Wang Lei, the fourth oldest, smiled and told Qin Guan, "I'll join you. I have no plans."

"How can you have no plans, Wang Lei? I'd hoped for your wisdom and help!"

Qin Guan knew he had to make the plan himself. He thought over what he could do and figured out a plan. To carry it out, he had to be easy to reach, so he took the time to buy an EasyOwn SIM card at Xizhimen. He did not care about the cell phone number, so

it only cost him 80 yuan.

Qin Guan memorized the phone number and asked Wang Lei to write an ad. The ad said: “Fierce Grade 3 of High School is approaching. Wanna help your kid win from the starting line? Wanna provide them with a first-hand examination experience? Hire a top student from the Capital University of Finance and Economics with 688 in the College Entrance Examination. Excel at the exam and bring your triumphant kid home!” Qin Guan had actually gotten 689 in the College Entrance Examination, but he deducted one point because 6 and 8 were both considered lucky numbers in China.

Under the curious gaze of the staff at the printing agency, Wang Lei made dozens of fliers and went to the entrance of the High School Affiliated to the Capital University of Finance and Economics.

Yes. That was Qin Guan’s plan. He had decided to do some tutoring, so he began to publicize his business before the holiday.

When Wang Lei arrived at the entrance of the university, he saw Qin Guan surrounded by parents and talking about his tutoring classes excitedly.

By the time he passed the fliers to Qin Guan, the latter had already convinced two parents to register their kids for his classes.

The two boys handed out all the fliers in just one morning, and shared the registration fees. The two of them would tutor three

students.

It occurred to Wang Lei that Qin Guan was crystal clear about the tutoring business. At the time, tutoring had not become a corporate chain business yet. Usually, college students either found a tutor on their own during their spare time, or sought help from small part-time agencies. Tutoring fees ranged from 15 to 20 yuan per hour, yet Qin Guan had charged the parents 25 yuan per hour. That was a real surprise.

At first, Wang Lei had just decided to give it a shot because he had nothing to do during the holiday. He had not expected to get such a high fee for tutoring.

The two boys shared the tutoring tasks. They were busy for six days during the holiday. They had done a great job. Every day they had four hours of tutoring. They went to two different houses, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. The students all lived nearby. This way, they were able to earn nearly 100 yuan a day. Tutoring was easy for them. Plus, they still had time for themselves.

Wang Lei was thrilled to discover that six days of tutoring could earn him a month and a half's living expenses. It seemed that he had underestimated Qin Guan.

While the two boys were making their schedule for the class, their other roommates heard the news. They were all awfully regretful. Who'd have known that it would be so easy for students to earn money? If they had, they wouldn't have made other plans.

Qin Guan and Wang Lei started tutoring as scheduled. The parents had initially just wanted to give them a shot, but they were quite satisfied with the two tutors. They had not spend their money in vain after all.

As top students of CUFE, Qin Guan and Wang Lei had a good knowledge of high school subjects and were both patient enough with their students.

The holiday was just coming to an end, when Qin Guan got a phone call from a mother living in the neighborhood. She had seen Qin Guan's flier on the school bulletin board. However, she told Qin Guan that her kid was not attending the High School Affiliated to CUFE, but the Tiesan High School of Xicheng, one of the most notorious high schools in Beijing.

The mother asked Qin Guan to tutor her kid at her house in the evenings. Her house was close to CUFE and her kid just needed two-hours of tutoring for a certain period. She was not willing to talk too much about her kid on the phone. Instead, she invited Qin Guan to her house. "Come over and you won't be sorry," were the last words Qin Guan heard on the phone, which was enough by itself to convince him to pay a visit.

After finishing his tutoring classes for the day, Qin Guan received deep gratitude from his students. He was feeling delighted as he rode his second-hand bicycle to the residential block nearby.

A graceful woman opened the door. She seemed surprised to

discover that the tutor was so young. She took a look at the boy's appearance. She seemed to have believed that all top students were ugly.

As soon as Qin Guan sat down, he heard a cracking noise from another room. "Mom, let me out! I've promised my classmate to go shopping with her!"

The mother sighed and told Qin Guan, "I know I'm being rude, but I was only wondering if you could tutor my daughter. I have no other requests. I just want you to make her focus back on her studies." Tears shined in her eyes as she added, "She used to be such a good girl, but since she started going to Santie High School, she has been hanging out with rascals and staying out late. Her teachers don't care about that sort of things, and she doesn't listen to me. I have to try every way I can."

Qin Guan felt scared. He realized this girl would be hard to deal with, so he decided to turn the woman down.

The mother seemed to guess his answer, and said, "If you'd give it a try, I'll pay you 50 yuan an hour, no matter the outcome. Just getting her to stay at home instead of fooling around will be good enough for me. I don't expect her to be able to go to college someday. As long as you can come and tutor her every weekend, you'll get an extra bonus of 500 yuan for half the term. What do you say?"

"Yes, absolutely!" Qin Guan was thrilled. "Please don't worry. I'll take care of it," he answered heroically. Qin Guan would never refuse such a good deal, but he could not guarantee that the girl

would make any progress.

The mother looked moved as she took Qin Guan to a room that was locked from the outside. Banging noises were coming from the inside.

When the woman opened the door, Qin Guan saw a girl that looked like an angry bird. He could tell that she was pissed off. She was about to start yelling at her mom when she noticed Qin Guan standing behind her. All of a sudden, the girl's expression became dumbfounded. She stood by the door stupefied as her mom and Qin Guan entered the room.

The mother asked Qin Guan to take a seat and said to her numb daughter, “Jiajia, what are you doing? Come and say hello to Mr. Qin. He is your new tutor.”

Hearing her mom, the girl turned her head and stared at Qin Guan. Without blinking, she shuffled to her bed and fixed her eyes on the young man in front of her.

The mother went on, “Mr. Qin is a top student at CUFU. I've asked him to help you with your studies, so you need to be good student...”

Fed up with her mom's chattering, the girl waved her hand and said, “Got it! I'll be good!”

The mother felt gratified. Turning to Qin Guan, she said, “It's

still early. How would you feel about starting today?”

Qin Guan got up and replied politely, “No problem. I’ll try and see how well she studies right now.”

The mother was quite pleased. She got up and left the room to avoid disturbing Qin Guan’s lesson.

With mixed feelings, Qin Guan turned back to the girl, who was looking him up and down from the bed. No wonder she looked like an angry bird. She was undoubtedly difficult to deal with.

Qin Guan noticed that the girl had red hair. Her peers seldom had their hair dyed at the time. Smart Cantonese hairstyles had not gained popularity in Beijing yet, so her hair looked truly shocking to him. Her ripped jeans, white sneakers, nose ring and tattoos reflected her trendy personality, which did not match her age at all. Qin Guan sighed to himself. He was already regretting accepting the job.

The girl was unaware of Qin Guan's thoughts as she poked his arm and said, “Hey, I’m Huang Jiajia. What’s your name?”

Qin Guan picked up the textbook from the desk. It was so brand new, its sharp edge could give him a paper cut.

“I’m Qin Guan. From now on, I will come and tutor you every weekend in the evening for two hours. Are you okay with that?”



Huang Jiajia was thrilled. She had become obsessed with her cute young tutor. “He’s so cute and his voice is so charming. I love him so much!”

Hearing what Qin Guan had said, Huang Jiajia bounced up from the bed. She grabbed a chair and sat down close to Qin Guan.

“Mr. Qin, what’s so interesting about that book? Come and chat with me. Is it true that you're a student at CUFE? Where are you from?” As she talked, she moved closer to Qin Guan.

Qin Guan was not attracted by the pretty young girl in front of him. He was still thinking of how he could help her get back on track.

“Let’s see how well you're doing at school.” Ignoring the girl’s pretty face, Qin Guan opened the book and turned to page one.

“Phew!” Huang Jiajia looked bored as she went back to her bed. Looking at Qin Guan, she sneered, “Who likes studying? I hate books! They’re nonsense!”

Qin Guan was thinking of how he could persuade this troublesome young girl to study, while Huang Jiajia was thinking to herself: “My tutor is so handsome and romantic. He is gentle and well-cultivated. If I give up studying and lose all ambition, he’ll be heartbroken! His melancholy eyes betray his sadness about my future. He must be really upset to see such a beautiful young girl go astray. Fine, I’ll study for his sake.”

That was a sudden change of heart, if there ever was one.

# Chapter 10: Cong Nianwei's Suitor At Tsinghua University

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Qin Guan was still thinking about what strategies he could use when Huang Jiajia grinned and went back to her seat, saying, "Okay. You poor thing, I'll be a good student, alright? But to be frank, I'm really bad at studying. You can use any method you like."

"Ah..." Qin Guan opened his mouth like an idiot. "I haven't tried any of my strategies. This girl changed attitude too fast. Anyway, it's good that she's willing to learn something."

Qin Guan took down all the high school textbooks from her bookcase and prepared a quiz for her. When he calculated the results, he fell into a strange silence again.

The girl had scored 3 out of 100 in Math by getting one multiple choice question right. She had probably just guessed it instead of calculating it herself. In Chinese, she had scored 70 marks, which was good enough for her to pass. In English, she had gotten a 50, which had been way out of Qin Guan's expectations. He had thought that she would not even get one exercise right. Last but not least, she had scored 12 in both Physics and Chemistry.

Qin Guan let out a sigh. He knew he had a long way to go.

He stood up and smiled at Huang Jiajia. "Today was just about getting to know you. I think I have some basic knowledge of you now. I'll come after dinner next Saturday, alright? I'll make a plan

for you, and we'll study together according to that plan.”

Huang Jiajia was still obsessed with the smile Qin Guan had just given her. She nodded numbly as she showed him out.

Jiajia's mother was sitting restlessly in the living room. When she saw Qin Guan and her daughter come out, she ran up to them right away.

Qin Guan smiled at the mother and said, “Let's call it a day. I've got some knowledge about Huang Jiajia now. I'll come for class next Saturday.”

Seeing that her daughter was not protesting, the mother replied delightedly, “Okay! See you then!” She picked up 100 yuan from the table and gave it to Qin Guan. “This is for you. Thank you, Mr. Qin. Please take good care of Jiajia.”

Qin Guan accepted the money. He believed he deserved as much considering what a handful this student was.

Under the loving gaze of the mother, Qin Guan rode his bicycle away, heading back to his dorm. The next day, he would take the day off to do some shopping. By then, the new term would officially begin.

What was the best choice for an undergraduate? Some would say that it was single life, while others would insist that it was fervent love. They were both wrong. Single life and fervent love were both

just illusions. The best choice was studying hard!

Freshmen had lots of basic common courses as well as a few specialized ones. Thanks to Qin Guan's amazing memory, these courses were a piece of cake for him. He was reviewing his lessons while the lecturer was teaching so that he did not have to review them again after the class. Qin Guan did not allow himself to waste any time. He had to pass the College English Test-Band 4 (CET 4) in advance, or he would feel sorry for himself. He had been reborn after all.

Qin Guan planned to pass the CET 4 during that term. The biggest difference between high school English and college English lay in the vocabulary, but memorizing English words was very easy for him.

Qin Guan had made a plan to get his life back on track. He had sat down and thought about his life. "It seems that I forgot something. Oh, yes. It's been more than half a month since the new school term began. I forgot to meet Cong Nianwei. Is there a chance that she has become some other guy's girlfriend by now?"

Qin Guan hastened to check his timetable. He realized that he had no class in the afternoon. Why wait then? "Let's go! Tsinghua University, I'm coming!"

It was October. During that time of the year, Beijing always enjoyed a clear sky and crisp wind. A speeding bicycle was seen on Tsinghua Road. The breeze blew up the rider's white jacket, revealing his black vest. The rider's bright smile brought out vigor and liveliness in everyone walking down the road.

Qin Guan arrived at Tsinghua University and parked his bicycle. He asked about Cong Nianwei and was told that she was having class at the lecture hall.

Qin Guan did not mind waiting as long as he could see her. He locked his bicycle and lay on the stone bench in front of the lecture building. He felt a gentle breeze blowing on his face. It was such a nice afternoon that he slowly fell asleep.

Qin Guan had no idea how long he had been sleeping, when he was suddenly woken up by someone. Through the daze of sleep, he sat up and tried to recognize the vague image in front of him. It seemed familiar. He blinked and fixed his eyes on the image again, realizing that it was Cong Nianwei.

Qin Guan stood up in a hurry. He wiped the corners of his mouth to make sure that he had not been drooling. That was good. "Is your class over?" he stammered.

Cong Nianwei stared at him with her big eyes. She looked surprised as she said, "Why did you sleep on the bench?"

Qin Guan was about to reply when his instinct warned him. He looked around and saw a boy and a girl standing behind Cong Nianwei.

He pretended that nothing was on his mind as he replied, "I came here to see you. I heard that you were having a class, so I waited here and ended up falling asleep."

Hearing that, the girl behind Cong Nianwei burst into laughter. Cong Nianwei looked a little angry and embarrassed. She took a glance at Qin Guan and then turned her to the girl, "This is Qin Guan. He's my high school classmate."

The girl looked as if she knew everything and needed no further explanation. She said, "Right. High school... classmate."

Despite feeling ridiculed, Qin Guan gave out a silly laugh. They were having a good time when suddenly a mistimed voice rang out behind Cong Nianwei, "Cong Nianwei is always so kind to everyone, even to her high school classmates."

Cong Nianwei frowned, but said nothing. The girl behind her unpleasantly took a step forward. She tucked her arm into Cong Nianwei's, trying to avoid the boy.

Qin Guan looked at him. His first impression of the boy was very bad. As he stood behind Cong Nianwei, his arrogance made Qin Guan feel quite uncomfortable.

The two boys looked straight at each other, as if there were sparks in their eyes.

The boy, who was named Chi Hailin, thought that this was not the most auspicious day for him. Having been an unusually lucky boy since a very young age, he had lived up to everyone's expectations by being admitted into Tsinghua University, one of the best universities in China. He had been an honor roll student

and had been often praised by his teachers, but he had never showed any interest in any girls wearing glasses during his high school days. He had believed that those girls were complete nerds and that he would meet his ideal girl in the near future. From the first time he had seen Cong Nianwei after going to college, Chi Hailin had been confident that he had finally found his girl. The guy currently standing between him and his girl was detestable.

Chi Hailin thought this boy was very tall. “He must be over 180 cm.” He looked at himself and realized he was at least 20 cm shorter than him. What’s more, the boy’s good figure, broad shoulders and long legs were much more pleasant looking than his own short legs. Chi Hailin turned his eyes to Qin Guan’s face. “Gee! What a handsome face! This guy has perfect eyebrows, deep eyes and a Roman nose. He’s just like a movie star! Sh\*t!” Instantly, Chi Hailin felt much smaller than the guy standing in front of him.

Noticing Chi Hailin’s facial expression, the girl beside Cong Nianwei could not help laughing out loud. “Chi Hailin, are you having a facial paralysis? It seems like you’re having an early age stroke. You’re truly weak.”

Qin Guan glanced at the girl with gratitude and secretly gave her a thumbs up.

Hearing the girl’s insult, Chi Hailin felt outraged. “Liu Chang, can’t you be a little nicer?” He pointed at Qin Guan’s face and said, “We’re both college students, so we should not judge a book by its cover.” Then he added maliciously, “Instead of idling away in other universities, why don’t you read some more and study harder?”



Chi Hailin believed his words were forceful enough to destroy this potential rival. Cong Nianwei had been feeling awkward, but hearing what Chi Hailin had said, she smiled and told the two boys, “Let me introduce you guys. Qin Guan is my high school classmate studying at CUFU. By the way, don’t you have class in the afternoon, Qin Guan?”

Seeing that Cong Nianwei was asking about him, Qin Guan immediately went closer to her and said in a friendly manner, “No, I don’t. I haven’t seen you for months, so I couldn’t concentrate enough to study.”

Cong Nianwei looked a little annoyed as she replied, “Come off it! I haven’t agreed to being your girlfriend.”

Qin Guan did not get mad. He walked forward with the two girls, the three of them talking and laughing.

Chi Hailin had gone numb upon hearing about CUFU. He was aware that Qin Guan was superior to him in looks and stature, but he had thought that he at least had a better educational background. However, it turned out that they were both top students. He felt discouraged. As he watched Qin Guan walk away, he thought to himself, “I have a bright future ahead of me. When I succeed in my career, I’ll be able to compete with you again.” Upset as he was, he walked back to his dorm.

As they were walking, Liu Chang said that she had some matter to attend to and left. Before she did, she winked at Qin Guan and

whispered, “Do it!”

After Chi Hailin and Liu Chang had left, Qin Guan unlocked his bicycle and took a walk with Cong Nianwei along the road on the Tsinghua University campus. They watched the gentle breeze blow the willow twigs by the roadside. Neither of them talked. They were too busy enjoying the nice, peaceful afternoon.

In the evening, Qin Guan unabashedly free loaded at the canteen of Tsinghua University with Cong Nianwei. Everybody could tell he was living off the girl. Qin Guan saw the contempt in other people’s eyes, but he still acted like he was unaware of it and had a big meal.

Despite having been criticized and scorned by Cong Nianwei the whole afternoon, Qin Guan felt delighted because she had agreed to him coming to see her once a week. If she was in a good mood, she could probably do some shopping or have a cup of tea with him.

Qin Guan grinned happily in excitement. He felt that his life was almost as perfect as he had thought it would be.

# Chapter 11: Landai Club

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Soon, the weekend came again. It was time for Qin Guan's tutoring session. Taking the materials he had prepared, Qin Guan headed to Huang Jiajia's home. When the door opened, Qin Guan was so scared, he nearly plopped down on the ground.

There was an angry bird with dark eye-circles standing in front of him. In order to welcome her Prince Charming, Huang Jiajia had meticulously put on smokey-eye makeup, the most popular makeup trend at the time. She was wearing low-rise jeans and a batwing-sleeved blouse that let her bellybutton show. With her silver-colored lips and dark eyes, Huang Jiajia believed that she was Miss Beauty herself.

Qin Guan calmed himself down. It was certainly hard to please the good customers. Lightening his mood, he began his tutoring for the day.

Huang Jiajia was getting impatient, but for the sake of Qin Guan's good looks, she held her temper in check and tried to be a good student.

Finally, after half an hour's class, she gave up. She put her jaw on Qin Guan's arm and pouted like a spoiled child. "Mr. Qin, how about we study tomorrow? It's Saturday! It's girls' night at the Landai Club. Let's go and have some fun!"

Qin Guan lifted her jaw up and gently moved it away from his arm. Huang Jiajia felt like her jaw had been broken. Seeing that

Qin Guan had gone on tutoring as if nothing had happened, Huang Jiajia rubbed her aching jaw. Her eyes had started to water. Irritated, she plumped out her cheeks as she thought to herself, “So you don’t like shy girls. Just wait and see how naughty I can be then!”

Huang Jiajia smirked and told Qin Guan. “Look at me, Mr. Qin.” Qin Guan was puzzled. He turned to her and saw Huang Jiajia put her hands on the lower hem of her blouse and lift it up, the pink bra she was wearing underneath showing.

Huang Jiajia was a minor still going through puberty. Her breasts were partly visible through her pink bra, giving off a smell of youth and vigor.

Qin Guan almost choked on his own drool. “Jesus! What are you doing? Pull your shirt down!” He hastened to cover his eyes with his hand, but there was still a gap left between his fingers.

Hearing Qin Guan’s scolding, Huang Jiajia felt satisfied. She moved closer to him and said, “I can pull it down, but you have to promise me one thing.”

Qin Guan shook his head as he said righteously, “I have my principles. Don’t you think I’ll promise you anything without careful consideration!”

Huang Jiajia smirked again. She moved forward, and Qin Guan was forced to back up until he reached the door. He'd been planning on leaving the room, but he was too afraid of being

mistaken for a rascal by the girl's mother and being turned over to the police. He was caught in a dilemma.

Huang Jiajia went on, trying to persuade Qin Guan, “I promise you that I’ll be a good student, just not today. I have somewhere to be, so you have to listen to me and help me get out.”

Qin Guan was getting furious. He scolded her in a low voice, “I can’t find any excuse to convince your mom that you should go out! It’s too late!”

Huang Jiajia blinked at Qin Guan and pulled her blouse down. Clapping her hands, she said, “No need to worry about that. It’s a deal!” Then she ran to the living room merrily and pouted to her mother, “Mom, I’ve finished my class for today, and Mr. Qin said I was really a quick learner. It’s Saturday. I promised Li Lin that I would sleep over at her house tonight so we could review the class together. Can I go out, mom? Please!”

The mother hesitated before turning to Qin Guan. Noticing that Huang Jiajia was still holding the lower hem of her blouse, Qin Guan was quite clear that he was being threatened by the young girl. He gave a forced smile and nodded, suggesting that he agreed with Huang Jiajia.

The mother was quite shrewd, though. She made a phone call to Li Lin’s before agreeing. “Oh, okay. No worries.” When she hung up the phone, she expressed her approval with a nod.

“Yay!” Huang Jiajia jumped up from the couch and picked up her

handbag from the table, ready to go. Suddenly she went back and told her mother, “It’s getting late. Can I ask Mr. Qin to walk me there?’

Her mother thought it was a good point, so she asked Qin Guan to take her daughter to Li Lin’s.

Qin Guan and Huang Jiajia left the house. Qin Guan walked quietly ahead, feeling very annoyed. He could not believe that he was being threatened by this little girl, who was so much younger than him.

Huang Jiajia stared at Qin Guan as she walked behind him. She was drooling as she watched him walk fast with his long legs. Wiping her mouth, she said, “What’s the hurry? Let’s take a cab.”

Confused, Qin Guan turned back to her and asked, “Doesn’t your classmate live nearby? Why take a cab?”

Huang Jiajia looked proud of herself as she replied, “Oh, Li Lin’s parents are traveling abroad. Her cousin answered the phone. I’ve promised to go to Landai Club tonight with the girls. Come on, don’t be stupid. Let’s go!”

Qin Guan did not come to his senses until he was inside the cab. Why am I taking her to Landai Club? I could have gone back to my dorm!

Huang Jiajia took no notice of his facial expressions. She took out

her compact mirror from her handbag and made her eye circles even darker.

The little yellow cab drove for over 20 minutes before they arrived at Landai Club.

Landai Club was one of the most famous clubs in Beijing between 1997 and 2003. It was close to the Beijing Film Academy, so it was always packed with people at night.

Every Saturday, women would come to the club and have fun for free. That night, a small dance band had been invited to perform an opening show, giving even more life to the small club.

As they got off the cab, Qin Guan and Huang Jiajia saw two girls in the distance wearing even heavier makeup than Huang Jiajia. The three girls got together and hugged, chatting and laughing excitedly. The girl named Li Lin even came over and said hello to him.

Qin Guan felt great pressure being surrounded by these fashionably dressed-up girls. In his past life, he had always dressed simply. It was cool in October, and he was wearing blue jeans and a pair of brown leather shoes made of sheep skin. He felt like a square peg in a round hole around those girls.

Qin Guan decided to seize the opportunity and get away. He was about to turn around when Huang Jiajia dragged him closer and said, “Come have fun with us!”

Qin Guan frowned. He took on a serious tone as he told Huang Jiajia, “I only promised you one thing, and I kept that promise. Take care of yourself. I gotta go.”

Huang Jiajia wanted to add something, when she realized that her friends were being harassed by some strange guys.

Since ancient times, there had been a lot of terms referring to guys flirting with girls. In some areas, it was called chasing girls, while in other places they called it picking up hot chicks. In Beijing, people would call it courting.

Clubs were usually filled with both good and bad people, and they were the perfect place for people with excessive hormones, who did not know what to do with them. People went there to have fun, court girls, or get into a fight, which was pretty common for people in clubs.

Qin Guan knew that he could not just pretend he hadn't seen anything and leave. He walked up to those guys and stood in front of Li Lin, facing them as he said, “Lin Lin, your dad has asked you to get back home.”

The guys left the girls alone. After all, the girls were too young for them, and they seemed like good students, despite the fact that they were dressed attractively.

The guys laughed and walked away. The girls were too young to protect themselves, and Qin Guan was worried about them. Fine. I'll stay with them, just in case.



Fun time started at 8 p.m. The moment the doors opened, the ladies in the two queues all swarmed in for a warm-up dance. Huang Jiajia and the other two girls did not move. They were still waiting for Qin Guan by the counter.

By the time Qin Guan had forced his way through the crowd, almost all the ladies had already gone into the club. Tickets to Landai Club were not expensive. The price from Monday to Friday was 10 yuan per person, and on the weekends it was 15 yuan.

Qin Guan escorted the girls into the club. The atmosphere inside was really different from outside. The club was like a big melting pot full of hormones. In the dim, flickering lights, men and women jostled against each other, the hot dancing on the stage making everyone restless.

Before Qin Guan could stop them, Huang Jiajia and the other two girls had pushed their way to the center of the club joyfully.

The club was playing Captain Jack-Sir Yes Sir, a popular song in 1996, and everyone was shaking their heads and butts crazily on the dancing floor.

Qin Guan got out of the crowd and took a seat by the bar. He turned to a waiter and said, “A Corona, please.”

The waiter served him his beer. Qin Guan took a sip, and leaned against the counter as he watched the people dancing in front of him.

He was about to take a second sip when two girls sat down next to him. They both had red lips and were wearing leather skirts. They were not wearing any silk stockings, and their high heels swayed slightly with their legs.

The girls tugged at Qin Guan's shirt and drew circles on his chest with their fingers. One of the girls pouted at him. "You here alone, hottie?"

Qin Guan gently pushed them away as he looked towards the dance floor. Then he smiled and told them, "No, I have a girlfriend."

Upon hearing that, the two girls immediately stopped flirting with him. They just gave him a charming smile and walked away.

Yes, local girls were indeed straightforward.

There were two more stages by the side of the club, which had been prepared for the big show at midnight. The dancers on the stage had been invited from dance clubs, or were students of the Beijing Dance Academy who were working part-time jobs at the club.

A couple was currently standing on the stage, dancing to the music. Their every move showed their bare desire. It was like all their cells were urging people, Follow us! Let's dance!

Qin Guan stared at the stage. His amazing memory helped him memorize every move of the leading dancer. He took a glance around the whole club and kept everyone's moves in mind.

With so many people dancing, the club was getting even warmer than usual. Qin Guan felt a wave of heat, and undid a button on his shirt. Suddenly, he saw Huang Jiajia quarreling with the others.

Qin Guan let out a sigh. Fretted, he scratched his head and forced his way through to her.

# Chapter 12: The Dance Competition And The Fight

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Huang Jiajia and her two friends looked like angry crickets as they quarreled with a little girl. The little girl, who was glaring at them, seemed much weaker than Huang Jiajia without a man by her side.

The girl was pointing at Huang Jiajia and shouting, “I did step on you! So what?”

Huang Jiajia's face was red. She looked completely pissed off, and she refused to back down. “You should apologize! You stepped on me three times, b\*tch!”

A man behind the girl stepped forward. He moved away the girl's finger and winked at Huang Jiajia, acting as a peacemaker. “Let it go. It's no big deal, right? Why bother fighting about it?”

The girl got even more furious when she saw her boyfriend wink at Huang Jiajia. “I picked a fight for you, you bastard! Your eyes have been all over this b\*tch ever since you saw her! You even moved closer to her while you were dancing. How do you expect me to let it go?”

As he watched the girl glare at Huang Jiajia, Qin Guan realized it was jealousy that had led to the fight. He dragged Huang Jiajia behind his back to get her away from the girl.

The girl rolled up her sleeves. She had been about to pull Huang Jiajia's hair when she saw Qin Guan step in between them. Confused, she raised her head. All of a sudden, her arm paused in mid-air. She looked dumbfounded. The surrounding spectators had also gone silent.

At the time, fighting was not a rare occurrence at clubs. Everyone loved to watch people fight. Whenever there was a fight, everyone would stop dancing just to watch.

All the boys were thinking to themselves, "Who sold this guy a ticket and let him in? Have you seen his looks and figure? How can I compete against him? Sh\*t!"

The girls, on the other hand, were thinking, "Hey, hottie! Look at me! I'm much hotter than that little girl behind you. I have plump breasts and a slim waist. I can give you everything that you want."

The security at the club stayed out of the fight. As long as there was no real fighting inside the club, they did not give a damn.

Noticing that Qin Guan had attracted so much attention, the peacemaking man got jealous. He could not wait to vent his pent-up frustration. The man, whose nickname was Little Charmer, was quite well-known at the Landai Club. His good looks and bad-boy attitude made him really popular among the girls. This time though, Qin Guan had stolen his thunder.

Little Charmer could not tolerate that. He looked at Qin Guan, who was obviously feeling out of place at the club, and said in an

irritated tone, “We’re all here to dance. Just forget about it, it's no big deal.” It seemed that Little Charmer had totally forgotten about his initial intention to flirt with Huang Jiajia.

Qin Guan was about to answer when Huang Jiajia could not help yelling, “What if I stepped on you? Would you be fine with that?” Realizing that Huang Jiajia was not as weak as he had thought, Little Charmer got excited.

Fighting between Beijingers was a lot of fun. People usually made an appointment with their opponents and spoke out their names respectively before the fight started. During a small-scale fight, if one party tried to make peace and the other party agreed, they would compromise and the fight would end. If the other party refused to do that though, then fighting would be inevitable.

Little Charmer told Qin Guan enthusiastically, “Damn, she’s not backing down! Fine, I won’t take advantage of you. Since we can’t fight here, let’s have a dance competition.”

As a frequent dancer at the club, Little Charmer knew that Qin Guan was not a regular there. He was pretty confident that he could win. He was actually planning on humiliating Qin Guan with his dancing abilities.

Some spectators were jeering at Little Charmer while others looked jealous of him. They were all urging him on, “Go! Be a man! Don’t be afraid!”

As she saw the eager crowd, Huang Jiajia felt a little worried. She

tagged at Qin Guan's sleeve and whispered, "Let it go, Qin Guan. You can't win."

Qin Guan did not answer. He undid another button on his shirt, rolled up his sleeves, and asked Little Charmer, "Who goes first?"

Little Charmer was stupefied. After a while, he pouted at Qin Guan and then looked at the two stages. "Together," he replied. "Are you okay with that?"

Having watched the scene, the club manager played a faster song and the leading dancer walked down from the stage.

Qin Guan and Little Charmer walked to each of the two stages. The spectators shouted, "Let's dance!" and started dancing to the song.

Little Charmer joined the crowd, starting to dance right away. To be frank, he was a very good dancer. The crowd shouted "Bravo" at him repeatedly.

Qin Guan was taking his time. He took out a fluorescent spray from Huang Jiajia's handbag and sprayed some to his front and back. Suddenly, his perfect figure shined under the dim lights, making up for his simple outfit.

Qin Guan put down the spray. He had not even started dancing yet, but all the girls had already surrounded his stage and were screaming over his attractive body.

The first part of the song was finished, and the second part began. Qin Guan started to dance. He raised his hands up and snapped his fingers. His hips moved, and his shoulders, legs and feet followed. One move after the other, Qin Guan danced faster and faster to the song.

The crowd went crazy in an instant. Everyone started screaming. In the dim yellow light, all everyone could see Qin Quan's fluorescent body dancing to the rhythm.

Qin Guan was just as good as Little Charmer. His various moves coordinated perfectly with the music.

Anyone could tell who was the better dancer. Qin Guan danced as gracefully as a knight while Little Charmer danced like a mad idiot.

As he saw Qin Guan's beautiful moves, Little Charmer stopped dancing. Gnashing his teeth, he walked down from the stage and dragged his girlfriend behind him as he exited the club.

Qin Guan went on dancing until the song ended. His forehead was wet with sweat. "Bravo!" he heard the crowd shouting. Satisfied, he walked down from the stage and went up to the bar to have a mouthful of cold beer.

Qin Guan sat down by the counter to take a break. He had experienced the preciousness of youth during that hot dance and he knew that this lifestyle was not for him, although he did enjoy it occasionally.



As he rested, the manager played a slow song. The people who had not been satisfied by the former hot dance started to dance cheek-to-cheek with their partners.

After dancing to their heart's content, Huang Jiajia and the other two girls walked up to Qin Guan and asked for three cans of cola. Qin Guan took a look at his watch and realized that it was already 10 p.m. "It's too late," he told Huang Jiajia. "Let's call it a day, alright?" Before Huang Jiajia could protest, Qin Guan went on to say, "May I dance with you? We need to talk."

Realizing that Qin Guan was serious, Huang Jiajia nodded and walked to the dance floor with him.

Qin Guan put his hands on Huang Jiajia's waist and asked her to follow his lead. While they danced, he said, "Is there something you want to say to me?"

Huang Jiajia looked at Qin Guan innocently. "Oh, you mean about tonight? Wow, you were just amazing!"

Qin Guan slowly said to her, "You're still a high school student. I really hope that you won't come here anymore."

Huang Jiajia did not answer. She wanted to move closer to Qin Guan, but he pulled a dance move to avoid her.

"If you keep fooling around, then I think my job as a tutor is

done. Now you have to go back home,” Qin Guan said. Huang Jiajia had not had enough time to figure out what was going on when Qin Guan dragged her off the dance floor and told the other two girls, “It’s getting late, I have to go. Let’s call it a day. You have to take Huang Jiajia home.”

The three girls were terrified of Qin Guan. They just nodded and walked out of the club with him. Qin Guan walked them to the street, intending to get a cab to take them home.

As they were waiting for the cab, a group of people suddenly came over. Qin Guan saw Little Charmer walking in front. He had been waiting for Qin Guan outside for a long time. After being humiliated that night, he had called in all his friends in the area to teach Qin Guan a lesson.

Qin Guan and the girls were led into a small alley near the club, where a man was squatting down on the ground smoking.

When they entered the alley, Little Charmer’s friends gathered behind him. The girls were too frightened to say anything. They dragged at Qin Guan’s sleeves as they looked at the guys in front of them.

Qin Guan did not panic. If these people had been from Northwest China, he would have already fled with the girls, but since they were just Beijingers, he thought he could give it a shot.

Little Charmer stared at Qin Guan and yelled at him arrogantly, “You bastard! You kept me waiting for a long time!”

Qin Guan sighed deeply with a straight face before he said, “In accordance with Act 160 of the Criminal Law of 1979, anyone who gathers a crowd with the intention of fighting, picks up a fight, insults women, or carries out any other immoral activities that disrupt public order, shall be convicted to fixed-term imprisonment of no more than seven years, be arrested, or be put under surveillance.” He panted for breath as he added, “Chasing, intercepting, abusing or threatening other people is considered equal to picking a fight.”

Little Charmer looked at Qin Guan as if he was dumb. “You idiot! You...” Before he could finish his words, the man smoking in the alley started choking from laughter.

## Chapter 13: A Fight Between Rough Men

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The man stood up and blew a smoke ring before he came over and asked Little Charmer, “Who is this guy? This is getting interesting. He's talking about laws with you guys!”

Qin Guan did not take the man's sneering seriously. He just went on, “I don't know what's on your mind. You think this petty thing humiliated you, so you wanna punish me? You dare not kill me. You're all locals, so you must know that the police knows you quite well. If I end up in the hospital because of you, you'll be sent to jail. If don't though, you won't be satisfied. So why don't we fight?”

The smoking man was stupefied. Qin Guan went on to say, “A man must bear the consequences of his own actions. I'm alone, yet you ask others for help. Is that because you're too weak, or because you want others to commit your own crimes for you?”

Hearing that, Little Charmer got a little worried. He turned to the smoking man and said, “Boss, back me up. This guy is talking nonsense.”

The smoking man threw his cigarette butt to the ground and snuffed it out with his shoe. Then he turned to Little Charmer and said, “Since it's no big deal, we'll stay here and cheer for you. You need to settle this on your own, though.”

This was how Beijingers acted. They were well-educated and stood by their own principles.

The man's words instantly eased Qin Guan's nervousness. He had guessed right. In his past life, he had known a labor contractor from Beijing, who had been a well-known local boss. He had told Qin Guan over dinner once that Beijingers had their own principles. After a fight, you could even chat with your opponent and become friends with him, as long as your differences were not irreconcilable.

Qin Guan waved at Huang Jiajia, suggesting that the girls back off. Little Charmer took off his jacket and revealed his muscles.

The two young men started fighting in the middle of the alley. Qin Guan had never fought with anyone in his past life. Although he was stronger now thanks to his frequent exercising, he was still at a disadvantage because he had no fighting experience.

Little Charmer launched three punches, and the third one hit the corner of Qin Guan's mouth. His lips started bleeding, the blood dropping to the ground along the corner. The girls covered their mouths with their hands. They dared not scream, in case Qin Guan got distracted. They had already come to know the consequences of their behavior.

Qin Guan was in a daze for a bit. He dodged another punch heading for him and puckered his lips, feeling a bloody smell rushed into his mouth.

Irritated by the smell, Qin Guan went back to his sloppy style. "Results are everything. Graceful fighting is nonsense!" Suddenly, Qin Guan became violent. He rushed up to Little Charmer and clutched him by the shoulders, inertia causing both of them to

tumble to the ground.

The smoking man was about to light a cigar when he saw Qin Guan's move and unconsciously pressed the lighter into his hands. The flame jumped up and almost burned his hair. He hastened to move the lighter away and press it again. After lighting his cigar, he turned his head and saw the two young men clutching at each other hard and rolling about in the small alley.

The alley was still an alley though, so they kept bumping against the walls on each side all the time.

Watching the two young men rolling about on the ground like flipping pancakes, Huang Jiajia could not help laughing out loud, despite the fact that there were still tears in her eyes.

Qin Guan became desperate. His eyes flashed red as he decided to maintain his good image. He gave Little Charmer a kick, and Little Charmer kicked him back.

By the time Qin Guan had narrowly gained control over Little Charmer, both their clothes were wet with sweat and mud. They made for a very funny scene.

The smoking man laughed out loud and patted Qin Guan on the back. "Hey, buddy. For my sake, let Little Charmer go. From now on, I promise you that Little Charmer will not cause you any trouble. If you're in the area and you get into trouble, call me and I'll help you."

Qin Guan agreed. He loosened his hands and rose to his feet. As he dusted himself off, he said, "Alright. You're a Boss, right? Actually, it was no big deal. We can just let it go."

The Boss, whose name was Bu Qinglu, was delighted by the respect Qin Guan had showed him. He patted Qin Guan's shoulder once again and said, "Okay. Next time you come here, it's my treat." Then he asked his friends to take away Little Charmer, who had been pretending to be dead on the ground.

Qin Guan led the girls out of the alley without saying a word.

Huang Jiajia pursed her lips. Qin Guan's fair skin had turned black and blue, and there were still bloodstains on the corner of his mouth. Seeing her handsome, gentle tutor get so rough, she suddenly felt that what she had longed for had been worthless. She felt a little lost. She was somehow afraid that Qin Guan would not want to tutor her or see her anymore.

As she thought of that, Huang Jiajia anxiously tugged at Qin Guan's shirt and whispered, "To be honest, clubbing is boring. I'll be a good student from now on. Will you still tutor me?"

Qin Guan felt relieved. Huang Jiajia's smokey-eye makeup had been ruined by her tears, but he tried to keep a straight face as he said, "Alright, but it will depend on your performance. It's too late today. You girls go back home and we'll talk about it next time."

The girls looked at Qin Guan and nodded like chickens. Then they took a cab and headed back home.

When the girls had left, Qin Guan could no longer put up a brave front. He grimaced in pain and flipped the dust off his body. “Jesus, it hurts so much. And they say a punch won’t make you feel anything. Liars!”

The next morning, Qin Guan got up from his bed in a daze. He was hurting all over his body and for the first time, he had slept in.

His roommates had already used the washroom. When they saw Qin Guan, they were all shocked. Rubbing his eyes, Qin Guan asked, “What’s wrong? Why are you all looking at me like that?”

Wang Lei could not help asking, “What did you do last night? Didn’t you look in the mirror when you got up?”

Qin Guan did not figure out what was happening until Liu Xiaoyang passed him a mirror from the upper bunk. Qin Guan took the mirror and had a look. Gee! He was pretty sure even his own mom would not recognize him if she'd been there.

Actually, Qin Guan had not been severely injured, but as a rookie, he had not known how to protect his face during a fight.

Little Charmer’ punches had been really cunning and accurate.

The first punch had hit Qin Guan’s eye, the second punch the corner of his mouth, and the third one his cheekbone. When Qin Guan had gone back to his dorm, he had already had three nasty



bumps on his face. Instead of bringing down the swelling with cold compresses, Qin Guan had tumbled into bed and gone straight to sleep. As a result, the right side of his face now looked like yeast bread, and his left eye was just like a panda's.

Ye Dong, the oldest boy in the dorm, could not bear to look at Qin Guan. He got out a bottle of tincture of capsicum from the box under the bed and skillfully applied it on Qin Guan's face.

Qin Guan briefly told his roommates about the previous night.

Ye Dong and Mu Lejiang did not say anything, but Liu Xiaoyang, the youngest boy, seemed quite interested in fighting. "Gee, why didn't you ask me for help? I'm a top warrior..."

Hearing that, Ye Dong started mocking Liu Xiaoyang, "We have no such rules in my hometown. We don't ask questions, we get straight to the fighting. Asking for help! It's fighting, guys! A real fight doesn't wait."

Liu Xiaoyang replied disdainfully, "You don't get it. Rules are a must in the world of Beijing gangsters."

Ye Dong put the lid back on the bottle and yanked Liu Xiaoyang, saying, "You seem pretty excited about fighting. How many times have you fought?"

Suddenly, Liu Xiaoyang looked like a deflated rubber ball. He seemed very upset as he said, "None! They complained that I was

too young. I've never gotten a chance. Plus, my mom is basically my shadow. I haven't even watched a fight!"

Mu Lejiang said nothing. He ruffled Liu Xiaoyang's hair before he walked out of the dorm.

Before everyone left, Ye Dong said, "Freshman Party is on tonight. Keep it in mind. It's in the university auditorium."

They all promised to meet there and then headed to class.

Qin Guan also went to class, despite his swelling face, which had become the talk of the town. Wang Lei, the fourth eldest boy in Qin Guan's dorm, was laughing all the way through the class. Indeed, Qin Guan's face looked nothing like his previous good looks.

The students on the right of Qin Guan could only see the malformed side of his face. The girls were feeling worried and sorry for their Prince Charming, while the boys seemed to gloating.

The students on the left of Qin Guan could see the pretty side of his face. With the dark circle around his left eye and his fair skin, he looked exactly like a giant panda, the most protected animal in China. Seeing that image, the boys and the girls on his left could not help laughing.

When the class was finally over, Qin Guan decided not to leave

his dorm for the rest of the day. His roommate Wang Lei brought his food to the dorm.

When it got dark, the boys headed to the university auditorium together. No one in Qin Guan's dorm put on a performance that night. None of them had been born to be artists, but they were a good audience.

When all the seats were occupied, the curtain parted. The host and hostess showed up on the stage and gave an opening speech. Qin Guan enjoyed it very much.

There was group dancing, solo dancing, a choir, an instrumental performance, etc. Most acts had a solemn atmosphere about them. To the boys, the party seemed too boring. They could not figure out why Qin Guan had enjoyed it so much. Qin Guan, though, knew that such a solemn performance would be quite rare in the near future. The Freshman Party was sure to be full of garish acts and crazy dancers.

# Chapter 14: Eggs Laid By The Red Flag

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Qin Guan's roommates did not want to keep watching the show. They were bored and wanted to leave, but suddenly they backed up when they saw several people carrying a drum kit, a keyboard and two speakers to the stage.

The performers were all well-dressed, and the lead singer was in olive green, looking like a soldier about to sing a military song.

After they tuned up, the performers played the electric guitar as an opening prelude, and the auditorium instantly became vibrant. The lead singer said, "Hello everyone! This is Eggs Laid by the Red Flag."

"The sudden opening is actually not abrupt

Now is the time and we know what to do

The red flag is still fluttering without direction

The revolution is still alive, and the old chaps are getting more active..."

The lead singer had a hoarse voice as if he'd been smoking too much. It actually made him sound like the perfect rock and roll singer.

The boys in the audience were cheering. Hands held high, they followed the rhythm and started to rock together.

Qin Guan and his roommates stood up as well. Liu Xiaoyang even jumped onto his chair. When the song was finished, the audience was fully pumped up.

Rock and roll was a code those days. Everyone had a soldier in their heart. People would fight hard for their dreams and future with indomitable will.

It had grown colder at the end of October. Qin Guan put on his jacket and set off for his first official tutoring class with Huang Jiajia. At 6:30 p.m., he showed up at the door of Huang Jiajia's home. When he walked into the house and saw Huang Jiajia sitting by her desk, he was shocked.

Her hair was not red anymore. Instead, it was black and shiny, dangling down her shoulders in two braids. She was not wearing any makeup either. This was the first time Qin Guan had seen Huang Jiajia with no makeup on. He recalled the first time he had seen her. She'd had thick eyebrows and big eyes, and her dark, dense eyelashes had looked like two tiny brushes. Her lips had been painted thick and red, making her look totally flamboyant. Yet now she was wearing a long pink T-shirt with a round collar and a pair of brown overalls. She looked like a good girl and a studious student.

Qin Guan did not say anything. Giving her an encouraging smile, he opened the textbook and started the class at an appropriate speed, "Here it means... Yes, call by value from here."

During the whole class, Huang Jiajia listened to Qin Guan carefully without any complaints.

When Qin Guan finished the class for the day, Huang Jiajia grimaced and said, “Mr. Qin, what did you think of my performance today? I’ll work even harder.”

Qin Guan was glad. This would help him make money much more easily. He had 4 hours of class a week and he would get paid 50 yuan per hour, so every month he would make 800 yuan just by tutoring Huang Jiajia.

Qin Guan did not show his joy. As he walked out of the house, he told Huang Jiajia, “You need to keep it up. One good performance doesn’t mean anything. Perseverance is what’s important.” Then he closed the door and left. He was quite busy. He had a kebab appointment with Wang Lei, and the next morning they would go to the China World Mall.

Beijing had been expanding gradually with economic growth. Business areas were various systems formed amid that expansion, and Wangfujin and Xidan were among the earliest ones in Beijing. The China World Mall was an emerging, vibrant business area that had become the home of many new industries and fashionable brands, such as Motorola and IBM.

Qin Guan and Wang Lei were currently at the foot of the China World Towers, the very center of the China World Mall. The two boys had seen the ad of a company on the CUFU billboard, and that

was why they had come here. The ad had been different than the rest, which was why it had aroused their interest.

Qin Guan and Wang Lei took the elevator to the consulting company on the 10th floor. The receptionist led them to a meeting room, where they saw a lot of people their age. Qin Guan believed they were also students applying for the part-time job.

When everyone was seated, a supervisor came into the room and handed out material to each of the young students.

The business of the consulting company was quite interesting. It helped retailers and traders of fast moving consumer goods find part-timers and sales promotion staff. It also did market research for some companies. This kind of business met the demands of foreign companies entering the Chinese market, thus consulting companies had become quite popular at the time. The company Qin Guan had visited was one of the oldest and the best in Beijing.

Qin Guan and Wang Lei read the material carefully. The positions included supermarket promotion specialists for sodas and snacks, and staff for a wine shop. Qin Guan noticed that these jobs were all on weekends, from 10 a.m. to 12 a.m. in the morning and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the afternoon. Wages would be paid daily in accordance with the standard rules, and the payment for the sales promotion staff was 50 yuan per day. The wine shop staff would get a daily payment of 100 yuan. Of course, those employees were required to have a good image and figure. There would also be an interview for the job.

Qin Guan pursed his lips. The wine shop staff was the highest

paying position among the three, although the payment was only as much as his tutoring fees. Half a loaf of bread was better than none though after all, so he decided to go to that interview. Wang Lei asked the supervisor, and he unexpectedly got a part-time job as a telephone researcher. From that day on and every weekend, he would work in the company as a telephone salesperson.

When the two boys walked out of the meeting room, Qin Guan told Wang Lei curiously, “You have a sharp mind for business. Why are you studying accounting?”

Pushing his glasses up, Wang Lei asked back, “You are so handsome, why do you study at CUFE?”

They both laughed. They parted at the corridor when Wang Lei was taken by the supervisor to the office of the telephone sales personnel. Qin Guan and several girls were taken to another office, where the interview would take place. Qin Guan was the only boy in the group. Curious about why a boy would apply for that position, the girls chatted and laughed among themselves. Qin Guan felt helpless. “Fine, I know this is something new, but you shouldn’t stare at me like I’m a monkey. Yes, I mean you. Don’t point your fingers at me!”

Qin Guan was feeling quite awkward when the door suddenly opened. Three elegant interviewers took a seat at the table. Qin Guan applied for the promotion position of Grand Bateau, a kind of middle-end wine imported from France.

The promotion staff would serve the wine at exhibitions around Beijing. It was not cost-effective for exhibitors to hire professional



models for the promotion, so the wine agent had come up with the idea of picking several college students for the job.

The last interviewees had not impressed the interviewers. They thought college students had no working experience and their age did not match the maturity of the wine.

The Chinese name of the wine was Longchuan. A general had made that particular wine for Napoleon, his leader during the Napoleonic Era. The wine was not expensive, but it had a dignity and elegance to it, so it was usually hard for college students with no experience to convey its connotation.

The interviewers seemed a little bored. In low spirits, they said, "Next."

It was Qin Guan's turn. When he stepped forward, the interviewers sat up instantly. Although they did not know about Qin Guan's temperament, they were all captivated by his face.

They asked him some basic questions, including his college and age, and Qin Guan took his time in answering every single one, not showing any nervousness.

The interviewers exchanged a look and told Qin Guan to move two steps forward. They noticed that he was neither overbearing nor servile. They nodded and told him, "Good. Take this blank resume, go to the third room on the left and give it to the director of the exhibition."

Qin Guan took the blank resume and bid the interviewers goodbye with a nod before pushing the door open and leaving the interview room. When he opened the door of the third room on the left, he saw a big glass wine table in the center with several goblets and two bottles of open Bateau on it.

There were already several tall fair ladies standing orderly by the desk next to the glass table. At the other end of the room, an old frowning tailor with a tape around his neck was measuring the size of a woman.

An assistant with freckles standing by the door saw Qin Guan walk into the room with a blank resume. She had a bundle of pens in her hand, and she handed one to Qin Guan. Pointing at a small round table at the corner of the room, she told him, “Yes, second round of interviews. Fill in the resume over there and then give it to me. I’ll give you a number tag. Then you can go to the desk and wait for the final interview with the sales director.”

Qin Guan moved the pen around in his hand. He was surprised to find that there was a third round of interviews after this one. “The final round? Why is this so complicated? It’s a part-time job after all,” he told the assistant.

The assistant’s face turned quite serious. It seemed as if this was an important task to her as she explained to Qin Guan, “We’re recruiting short-term part-timers because we don’t have much time to prepare. We have no choice. Vinexpo China is next week, followed by the China International Wine and Spirits Exhibition. They’re both well-known exhibitions in China. We have to take this seriously.”

# Chapter 15: The Bateau Interview

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Qin Guan was amused by the serious look on the assistant's face. He nodded at her and walked to the round table.

The assistant covered her flushed cheeks as she thought to herself, "This boy is so cute when he smiles. He will probably pass the interview."

Qin Guan filled in the resume carefully on the table. Although he knew that he might not match the taste of wine, he had to take the second round seriously. The assistant had told him so.

After filling in the resume, Qin Guan handed it to the assistant and got the number eight plate from her. Then he went to the desk and joined the queue.

He stood at the end of the queue, waiting quietly for his turn.

Some girls passed the interview and others failed, but those who failed did not look sad. It was probably because this was only a part-time job.

Soon, it was Qin Guan's turn. The sales director was a woman in her forties. Qin Guan smiled at her and put his plate on the table.

The sales director was surprised. She pushed up her glasses, thrilled to see a boy applying for the job. As a matter of fact, she had been a bit angry, because most interviewees had not lived up

to her expectations.

Most wine customers were Chinese men, thus female shopping guides were good for wine promotion. However, recruiters should not ignore female customers or male customers with a different taste. If customers could not feel the connotation of the wine, no seductive woman could convince them to buy it.

The interview had just gotten interesting. The sales director pulled her chair forward. Taking Qin Guan's resume she said, "Qin Guan, right? Capital University of Finance and Economics. Good. I've got several questions for you. First, what do you know about wine?"

Qin Guan was a bit dumbfounded. He knew a lot about beer and spirits, because he'd drunk a lot of them when he'd been an equipment salesperson in his past life. However, he knew very little about wine. According to traditional Chinese table culture, businessmen or politicians usually ordered spirits. Wine was considered a finishing drink for a meal. Therefore, Qin Guan had never studied wine brands before. He only knew about spirits such as Maotai and Wuliangye. He had never even ordered expensive spirits at a karaoke bar, because he'd rather spend the money on gifts for his business partners instead. As for western-style restaurants and wineries, he sure knew nothing about them.

Qin Guan could only bite the bullet. He told the sales director, "I literally know nothing about wine."

The sales director looked a little disappointed. She went on to ask, "Have you ever drunk any wine before? What brand was it?"

Qin Guan felt encouraged as he thought to himself, “I can do this! I don’t know much about wine, but I have drunk a lot of it.” He nodded at the sales director and said, “I’ve drunk a lot of wine, such as Changyu, Greatwall, Bordeaux, San Pietro... I must be forgetting some.”

The sales director was shocked. She reckoned Qin Guan had to be an alcoholic if he’d drunk so much wine at such a young age. She pushed up her glasses again and asked, “Since you’ve drunk so much wine, can you go over there and have a sip?”

Qin Guan nodded and said, “Okay.” He thought this would be quite easy for him. He walked up to the big glass table, picked up a bottle of wine and pulled the cork out. Then he took a goblet and poured some.

At first, the sales director had been excited, but as she saw how Qin Guan had filled the goblet, she immediately covered her face. She could hardly bear the sight, but she had to watch Qin Guan’s next step.

With a satisfied look, Qin Guan raised the goblet to his mouth. The sales director was feeling bored until she saw Qin Guan drink up the wine. Then a voice reverberated in her brain, “He drank it up in one go! Even an alcoholic would not have drunk wine like that!”

Qin Guan took a deep breath and turned to the sales director with the empty goblet in his hand.

The sales director was massaging her temples, wondering why that day's interview was not going well. When she raised her head, she saw Qin Guan standing in front of the glass table with the empty goblet. He was standing against the sunlight, and the rays of light reflected on the glass table were shining on him. The rosy wine, the crystal goblet and the amber wine bottle made the scene before her look like an elegant painting.

The sales director was dumbfounded. Qin Guan realized there was still some wine on his mouth, and he wiped it with his hand, ruining the harmonious scene.

As if waking up from a dream, the sales director coughed awkwardly. Two voices were arguing inside her brain.

One voice said, "Look at his coarse manners. He totally ruined the lingering effect of the wine," while the second one said, "You can teach him how to sip wine. The scene you just saw proves his charm. Let him pass."

The sales director thought it over for over a minute before she told Qin Guan, "You have passed the interview." Pointing at the tailor, she added, "Have your measurements taken over there. When you're done, go to the small meeting room. You'll receive a basic training there."

Qin Guan nodded and went up to the tailor. The sales director put his resume into the box tagged "Accepted" and moved on to the next interview.

The old tailor did not talk much. When he finished measuring a female model, he waved at Qin Guan, gesturing for him to come over.

Qin Guan walked up to the man and took off his jacket, leaving his weskit on.

The tailor turned a page on his little notebook and began to measure him with a tape.

Shoulder Width: 53 cm; Bust Size: 105 cm; Waist Circumference: 68 cm

Abdomen Circumference: 85 cm; Hips: 100 cm; Thighs: 49 cm

The tailor raised his eyebrows. The middle-aged man was not particularly eye-catching, but he was recognized as one of the best tailors in Beijing. He could not both design and tailor like a fashion designer, but he had made many clothes over the years for both starlets and fashion show models.

“Gee, this young man is like a hanger!”

Having not said a word for so long, the tailor finally asked, “Young man, how tall are you?”

Qin Guan was putting on his jacket when he heard the man’s

question. He smiled and replied, “183 cm. At least that was my height when I graduated from high school.”

The tailor looked him up and down before he said, “You must be taller than that. Go measure your height over there.”

Qin Guan looked at the direction the man was pointing at. There was a ruler for height measurement there. He nodded at the tailor, “Okay.”

Qin Guan stood straight against the wall as the tailor moved close to the ruler, standing up on a stool. He pressed down Qin Guan’s hair and read the ruler carefully, “As I said, you’re taller than that.” He patted Qin Guan on the shoulder as he said, “Good. You’re 185 cm, not 183. You’ve grown taller.”

Qin Guan did not know why the tailor had asked him to measure his height. He nodded at the man and wrote down his name and cellphone number on the small notebook just like he was told.

Looking at Qin Guan’s back, the tailor picked up his notebook, thinking to himself, “Even male models hardly ever have such a perfect figure.”

Qin Guan, of course, was unaware of the tailor’s thoughts. He just believed growing taller was a good thing. In his past life, he’d also been strong and brave, but he had not been tall enough. His muscles had made him look short.



Qin Guan opened the door and walked into the meeting room. There were already three girls waiting inside. The girls went dumb when they saw that it was a boy coming in. When they recovered, they started chatting and laughing merrily.

A member of the training department was pouring wine into glasses at the table and giving each interviewee one glass. Qin Guan and the girls waited for a while, but nobody else come in. The woman from the training department clapped her hands and said, “Today you will be trained here. I’ll give you a fast training course. Each of you will get material about this brand after the training. You can read it at home to get the general idea.” She picked up a glass of wine and moved it under the light as she said, “During the exhibition, you can’t wear perfume or cosmetics with a strong smell. You aren’t allowed to smoke either. Now let’s move on to the wine-tasting. Step one, observe the color and luster. If turbidity, sediment or suspended solids are found, the wine is disqualified. Of course, no such thing will be found on the wine at the exhibition.”

“Step two, smell the fragrance. Pick up your glass and move it three centimeters away from your nose. Breathe in its smell through your nostrils. Remember, don’t exhale. Just inhale the wine. Don’t do it for too long, though. If you can’t distinguish the smell, shake the glass and smell it again.” The trainer shook her glass lightly.

Qin Guan used his amazing memory again, keeping every instruction of the trainer in his mind.

“Step three, taste the wine. Wine has five different tastes: sour,

sweet, bitter, spicy and puckery. When you taste it, take a sip of about five milliliters. As staff, you need to experience the whole tasting process for your customers. You can also guide the customers on how to have a taste themselves.”

The trainer poured wine into a glass and held the base of her glass with her thumb, index finger and middle finger. Tilting the glass away from her at a 45-degree angle, she shook the glass in her hand and moved it in a circle parallel to the table.

Then she added, “You can move it clockwise or anticlockwise as you like.” Qin Guan saw the wine leave several traces on the inner wall of the glass after being shaken.

The trainer moved the glass to her nose and smelled it near the rim before taking a sip. She kept the wine in her mouth, tasting it repeatedly as if she was chewing on it so the fragrance could diffuse in her mouth. After going through all the steps, she finally swallowed the wine.

# Chapter 16: Big Plate Chicken At The China World Mall

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Qin Guan had just realized how he had behaved at the interview. He still preferred his old ways and believed such a process was too complex, but luckily, he had already memorized the three steps, so there was no need for him to worry.

The trainer finished the demonstration by saying, “Tasting wine is just like tasting a cup of tea. Some things can be ignored, but the right mood has to be maintained. You’re not cattle drinking water from a ditch after all.”

The trainer’s words had struck Qin Guan. Taking the material, he walked out of the meeting room in dismay.

When Qin Guan and the girls walked out, the assistant gave each of them a small note. The assembly location and meeting time were both written on it.

Qin Guan folded the note and went to see Wang Lei. When he reached Wang Lei’s office, he saw a pile of questionnaires on the table in front of his roommate. Qin Guan picked one up from the table and asked in an exaggerating tone, “You did all these this morning?”

Wang Lei hang up and answered inadvertently, “Yep! I’ll get paid depending on how many I complete. This job suits me well!”

Wang Lei wanted to make hay while the sun shined, so Qin Guan had to go back on his own. Taking a look at his watch, Qin Guan dragged Wang Lei off to have lunch with him.

At the time, the China World Mall was one big construction site. Foundations were being dug and new buildings were being constructed, dust swirling in the air all around the Mall.

The two boys believed that western-style food required complex table manners, and a buffet at a hotel was too expensive. There were very few dining choices for them.

Qin Guan knew from his past life that there was a snack street in the area. He led Wang Lei to a small alley which had not been torn down yet, and pointed at the restaurants there. Like a rich man, he said, “What do you wanna eat? Pick anything you like. It’s my treat!”

Wang Lei did not pretend to be courteous. Seeing so many restaurants there, Chongqing delicacies, Shaxian delicacies and Lanzhou hand-pulled noodles included, he pursed his lips. He knew the food there would be very cheap.

Finally, the two boys decided to eat at a Xinjiang restaurant. After they got their seats, they asked for a Big Plate Chicken, two baked Xinjiang pancakes and a bowl of Shanxi Torn Noodles.

When the Big Plate Chicken was served, the two boys found that it was worth its money. It was a huge round plate with a thick layer of snow-white Shanxi Torn Noodles covered in sauce-dipped

chicken, potatoes, onions and green peppers, served with red chili and numbing Sichuan peppers. The dish really aroused their appetite.

Holding the baked Xinjiang pancakes in their hands, they started gorging themselves on the Big Plate Chicken.

When the check came, it was only 32 yuan. Qin Guan wiped his mouth and bid Wang Lei farewell before he headed back to school.

In the evening, he went to Huang Jiajia's house for their lesson. Lest the exhibition made him late for his tutoring, he asked for a day off and told her next week's class would be postponed.

Huang Jiajia was curious, and she asked Qin Guan why he was putting off their lesson. Qin Guan did not intend to keep his part-time job a secret, so he told her all about it.

Huang Jiajia said she fully supported her teacher in his part-time job. She said postponing the class was totally fine with her, and Qin Guan did not need to worry about her studying. Qin Guan expressed his deep gratitude for Huang Jiajia's support.

The class ended in a friendly atmosphere, but Qin Guan did not know that as soon as he left, Huang Jiajia started giggling like a little fox who'd just stolen a chicken.

Back at his dorm, Qin Guan called Cong Nianwei and told her about his part-time job next week. He sincerely asked for a day off

and apologized for not being able to see her at Tsinghua University.

Cong Nianwei did not complain on the phone, which upset Qin Guan a lot.

The next day, while Qin Guan was in class, his phone vibrated. He took a look at the number and decided to reject the call. When the class was over, he called the number back. The receptionist on the phone gave Qin Guan an address in her sweet voice and told him to try on the clothes on site.

Qin Guan wrote down the address and checked what classes he had in the afternoon. He had enough time, so he decided to go there after his classes were over.

During his afternoon class, Qin Guan kept wondering how the clothes had been made so fast. He had just had his measurements taken a day ago after all.

As soon as the class was over, Qin Guan hurried to the address he'd been given.

At 5 p.m., Qin Guan pushed open the glass door of a clothes customizing shop at Xidan. The receptionist took him to the tailoring room. He had come so late that he was the only one there.

The tailor was busy with his molds when he saw Qin Guan come in. He nodded at him, suggesting that Qin Guan to go to the fitting

room and put on the suit provided by the wine trader for the exhibition.

Qin Guan took the standard, dark grey, three-piece suit and a white shirt with the label still on. He walked into the fitting room and took all his clothes off except his underpants before he put the suit on.

The suit looked good. There was no brand mark on it or on the white shirt provided by the exhibitor. The shirt looked brand new, as of it had been bought for an emergency.

Qin Guan buttoned it up and put on the suit jacket casually before he walked out of the fitting room.

The tailor was busy with his work. He pointed at a mirror without even taking a look at Qin Guan, and said, "Go to the dressing mirror and have a look. Tell me if you have any questions."

Qin Guan went to the dressing mirror as he was told. Looking into the mirror, he was a little bemused. He had seen himself in a mirror many times, but he still felt like a star every single time. It seemed that he had just been born handsome.

This was not his own narcissism speaking. The tailor, who had been staring at him, also seemed speechless. He wanted to see how Qin Guan looked so he could do tailor some clothes for him.

The exhibitor had borrowed the suit from a renting store. It was an ordinary Givenchy, neither independently designed nor made by specially-assigned manufacturers. Still, this suit cost about 25,000 yuan.

Bateau was a middle-end brand of wine, but it enjoyed a high recognition worldwide.

The two brands were both from France, so the Givenchy dealer had agreed to lend the suit to the exhibitor for free.

The tailor thought the suit fit Qin Guan really well. He wanted to make the pant legs a little narrower so Qin Guan would look even more sexy, but considering that simplicity, freshness, decency, and toughness combined with softness were the philosophy of Givenchy, he gave up on the idea.

The tailor did not talk much about the suit. He just asked the assistant at the reception desk to cover the suit and wrapped up the fitting process.

When everyone had left the store, the tailor opened his notebook to the place where Qin Guan's measurements were written and read it carefully. Then he picked up the phone from the table and made a call.

The call got through, and the tailor calmly said, "Hello, is that Xue Wanyi? I'm Old Liu. I'd like to recommend a model to you. No, not from a model agency. He's a student doing a part-time job here... Let me tell you more about him..."



They spoke on the phone for over five minutes before hanging up. Old Liu tapped the notebook in his hand and smiled. “Now it’s up to you, young man.”

On the day of the exhibition, Qin Guan got up very early and for the first time in his life, he showed off shamelessly in front of the mirror.

His roommates also washed and got ready to go to the exhibition to support Qin Guan on his new job. Wang Lei would only go for a while at noon though, because he had a part-time job as well.

Qin Guan could not stop them from coming along, but he knew exactly what was on their minds. They were not going to the exhibition to support him, but to see the female staff working with him.

# Chapter 17: Vinexpo China

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The International Convention Center (ICC) enjoyed a very good location. People could access it very easily. The moment Qin Guan and his roommates got off the train, they saw the center bustling with people.

The exhibition had not begun, so most people were staff of wine manufacturers. With the small note in hand, Qin Guan found the assembling place. His roommates followed him, and suddenly stopped blinking.

Besides the three girls that had been there on training day, the wine dealer had hired two more female models from a model agency. Seeing their long beautiful legs, Qin Guan's roommates could not help but drool.

The director of the part-timers handed out an exhibition program to all the female models and gave everyone a few additional tickets.

After giving the tickets to his roommates and telling them not to cause any trouble, Qin Guan followed the director to the exhibition hall.

It was still early, so the exhibition was only open to staff. They all fetched their clothes from the director and went to the staff room to change. Qin Guan was the only boy there. By the time he got changed, all the girls had taken their places.

The director saw Qin Guan wearing the suit and walking out of the fitting room towards the exhibition stand. He looked like a royal boy from Europe, vividly conveying elegance.

He waved to Qin Guan and asked him to come over to the wine cabinet at the hall center, where a swivel chair, a wooden wine rack and several goblets could be seen, creating an appropriate wine-tasting atmosphere.

Each member of the wine-tasting staff held a wine plate, on which several refined glasses had been put, waiting to pour wine into. They held the glasses close to their chests, arms or thighs and walked around the hall. If they saw anyone who seemed interested, they would get them a drink and lead them to the booth.

Both wine and spirits were exhibited at Vinexpo China. The major goal of the exhibitors was to attract distributors and agents across China.

The exhibition opened at 9 a.m. and all exhibitors were ready to promote their brands.

If one passed the rotating ticket office at the entrance and walked through the square, they could see the central hall of ICC in the very middle. As distributors and agents from all over China entered the hall, a silent war started.

Everyone was dazzled by the bright lights, colorful backgrounds, crystal wine glasses, the staff walking back and forth, and the graceful or bold music playing.

The Bateau marketing man was embattled. He had a stack of leaflets in hand, and gave one to each potential customer. Five members of the wine-tasting staff had suffered yawl scratches to their thighs. Holding their wine plates in hand, they walked to different aisles in stilettos.

Qin Guan's roommates approached his stand as soon as they entered the hall. They pretended to care and suggested that they have lunch together right before disappearing into the crowd.

Qin Guan straightened his collar in an effort to get more comfortable. The exhibition lights shined down on the wine cabinet, creating a beautiful image. It was too warm for him, though.

Looking at the three-piece suit he was wearing and the cheongsam of the girls, Qin Guan could only sigh.

Lots of visitors had entered the hall by 9.30 a.m, and many agents were standing in front of the booths, staring at the brands that interested them. If they wanted to know more, they would take a seat and talk about the details with the marketing personnel.

The Bateau booth enjoyed a good location that attracted a lot of wine distributors to have a look.

When the distributors and agents came close, they saw a young man in a dark grey suit leaning against the wine-tasting table at the central booth. The brown wooden rack held dozens of bottles

of wine, and the light reflected by the crystal glasses formed a number of halos on the young man, creating a mysterious atmosphere.

Seeing quite a few visitors approach his booth, Qin Guan immediately put on an elegant expression. Checking that Qin Guan was ready, the marketing man gestured for the visitors to look at him.

The visitors turned to the wine-tasting table where Qin Guan was leaning, thinking to themselves, “Where does this young man come from? He looks like he has very good taste. Maybe he’s an old customer of Bateau invited here for the promotion?”

If Qin Guan had known what they were thinking, he would have yelled at them, “Absolutely not! It’s just a part-time job, okay? A hundred yuan for the whole day!”

The marketing man was thrilled, and he started to introduce the wine to the visitors in excitement. The agents were quite satisfied. They were convinced that the wine was high quality.

After the initial communication, many distributors came to the wine rack where Qin Guan stood and tasted the wine with him before they left. Qin Guan used his amazing memory and put into practice what he had learned from his training teacher.

When the agents saw Qin Guan’s smooth, graceful wine-tasting procedure, they were even more convinced that this brand was top quality.

In just one morning, five agents from different cities had signed an initial agreement with Bateau. The marketing men were all thrilled and every single one of them would come and pat Qin Guan on the shoulders as they passed by.

Qin Guan was not as excited as they were. It was too warm for him to be wearing a three-piece suit, so he decided to ask the director to allow him to at least take off the jacket.

The director thought it over. Patting Qin Guan on the shoulder, he said encouragingly, “Okay. Can you keep it on just this morning? You know, the majority of the visitors are agents from different cities, and the Givency suit can fully convey our product’s philosophy. Could you please hold on for a little while?”

Qin Guan was fully aware of the director’s feelings. Fortunately, it was almost noon time, so he just needed to put up with it for a short time.

The Bateau booth was quite popular that morning, but at 11:40 a.m. all the working staff could finally take turns and take a rest. Qin Guan declined the takeaway ordered by the working assistant; instead, he went out with his roommates for lunch.

Wang Lei had finished his morning work early and was waiting for them outside. The boys met, planning to glut themselves at Origus.

Why did I use the word glut, you ask? Maybe the reader needs an

explanation. Origus was a quite cost-effective pizza buffet restaurant.

Students had a certain strategy when it came to gluttoning at ORIGUS. Before they went there, they would starve themselves until they were too weak to walk, so they'd have to walk in by supporting themselves with their hands against the wall. When they finished their meal, they would be so full that they'd also have to walk out by leaning against the wall.

Qin Guan took off his suit jacket and hang it on a hanger in the lounge. He just wore his shirt and waistcoat to lunch, because he didn't want to stand out too much.

In order to celebrate his success at his part-time job, Qin Guan announced that he would get the check. The boys discarded all courtesy and went in first. The meal cost Qin Guan 168 yuan altogether. "Gee, this is cheap!" he thought. When he gave the receipt to the waiter, he saw that all his roommates had already started helping themselves. He took a seat, watching each of the boys holding a plate and stacking food on it. When they came back to the table, Qin Guan saw New Orleans roast chicken wings, roast drumsticks, barbecued pork and pork ribs seasoned with minced garlic on their plates.

He told the boys calmly, "Can you please have some veggies?" They all answered, "How can we satisfy our appetite with veggies?"

Qin Guan pursed his lips. It occurred to him that at the time, people did not know how to eat healthily. He could only fetch a

plate for food and get himself a cup of juice.

When he went back to the table, the chicken wings that had been piled up like mountains had all become chicken bones. As Qin Guan picked up a slice of pizza, he saw his roommates bring a second plate to the table.

Qin Guan looked around and noticed that the waiter's face had turned quite stern. He could do nothing but give them an awkward smile. In the blink of an eye, the boys had already brought a case of beer over and started their third round of eating.



## Chapter 18: Huang Jiajia Vs. Cong Nianwei

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Qin Guan and Liu Xiaoyang held a chicken wing in one hand and a cup of juice in the other as they watched their roommates wine and dine. The two boys were thinking to themselves, “Drink as much as you like. You’ll finally make yourselves suffer.”

It had only been half an hour since the boys had started eating, but the waitress had already cleaned the table twice. Feeling his stomach, Qin Guan stopped eating.

Mu Lejiang was surprised to find that Qin Guan had not eaten that much. With a toothpick in his mouth, he said, “Come on, man!”

Qin Guan answered helplessly, “I’d love to, but look at me! I can’t eat too much.”

The boys took a glance at Qin Guan’s tight suit and waistcoat. They imagined how he would look if he got full. They all shook their heads and said, “You’re right, you can’t.”

Qin Guan looked at his watch and decided to go back to the exhibition hall. He could not just sit there and watch the boys eat, so he bid them goodbye and went back. When he got to the hall, he did not put the suit jacket on again. The lights inside were so many that the temperature was up by 2-3 degrees Celsius because of the heat they generated.

Qin Guan undid two buttons at the top of his shirt and rolled up

his sleeves. When the director passed by and took a look at him, he nodded at the boy in satisfaction.

Qin Guan did not know why the director had nodded at him until the afternoon session began. There weren't just distributors and agents from all over the country. Wine and spirit collectors, bar owners and wine shoppers had also come to the exhibition. Even some citizens and media representatives had come to experience the foreign wine culture.

Qin Guan relaxed. The director had gotten him a fashion magazine to read so he could recreate a casual style.

Qin Guan took a seat on the high chair in a relaxed mood. From time to time, he would fill a glass and sip a little wine, enjoying his leisure time. All the other staff were glaring at him.

Before Qin Guan could enjoy it to his heart's content though, he heard a voice from behind him, "Mr. Qin! You're here! I found you!"

Qin Guan turned his head. "Gosh! What is she doing here?" It was Huang Jiajia.

Qin Guan was surprised. "How did you know I'd be here?" he asked.

Huang Jiajia looked at Qin Guan proudly and replied, "You told me you had a part-time job last time and would have to put off our

class. I checked online and noticed that the only exhibition today was in ICC. That's why I came here. I made it!" Huang Jiajia fanned herself with her hands. "Gee! It's too warm in here. I'll wait for you so we can go back together, Mr. Qin."

Qin Guan immediately put his hands together, raised them up and bowed. "Oh, my God! I'm begging you to go back home. Please don't cause any trouble here."

Huang Jiajia looked upset as she said, "Why would I cause trouble? I'll be a good girl, I promise. I just wanna wait for you here."

As Qin Guan and Huang Jiajia were talking beside the booth, another voice rang out from behind them, "Qin Guan, what are you doing here?"

Qin Guan turned around. "Oh, my God! It's Cong Nianwei!"

Right away, he put his hands down and pretended to clean his shirt. He patted himself off and smirked. "Cong Nianwei! What are you doing here?"

Cong Nianwei took a look at Qin Guan and the girl behind him, who was glaring at her.

"I came to greet my high school classmate who works here. Is it a bad time?"

“No, of course not. I was just surprised is all.”

Cong Nianwei did not answer right away. She gave him a gentle smile before she said, “So why are you talking instead of working? Is this your new friend? Why don’t you introduce us?”

Qin Guan was charmed by Cong Nianwei’s gentle smile. He stared at Cong Nianwei as he shook his head. “Oh, no. She’s my student. I asked her to go back home.”

Suddenly, Huang Jiajia popped out from behind him. “I’m Mr. Qin’s student. Who are you?” She was upset by Cong Nianwei’s appearance, which had interrupted her conversation with Qin Guan. She felt that Qin Guan’s silliness was offending, so she decided to have a talk with this girl.

Noticing that it was a little girl, Cong Nianwei was relieved. “You’re Qin Guan’s student, right?” she said in a soft tone. “He’s told me all about you. Nice to meet you.”

Huang Jiajia got even more upset. The girl before her was truly pretty. She was nothing like her. She was really intelligent, gentle, and polite, while Huang Jiajia just looked like a cute girl with poor taste.

Huang Jiajia was unhappy. “Yes. I’m Mr. Qin’s student. Aren’t you his high school classmate?” she said impolitely. “I’m waiting for Mr. Qin so we can go back together.”

Cong Nianwei said nothing. She looked at Qin Guan as if she wanted to say something to him. Qin Guan suddenly realized what was happening between the two girls. Immediately, he explained, “Huang Jiajia, this is my high school classmate and potential girlfriend. If she accepts my request, she will become your teacher’s girlfriend.”

Hearing this, Huang Jiajia somehow felt wronged. Tears filled her eyes, but she forced herself not to cry before Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei. Instead, she mumbled, “She hasn’t answered your request, but you’ve been such a coward. What’s so good about that?” Then she glanced at Cong Nianwei, bowed her head down, and stopped talking.

Qin Guan did not yield to the strong, but he did to the weak. The fact that Huang Jiajia was in such low spirits made him feel sorry for her.

Cong Nianwei took a look at Qin Guan and told Huang Jiajia, “Since you’re here, why don’t you look around until Mr. Qin can go back with you? He won’t miss your class.”

Huang Jiajia raised her head. She felt that Cong Nianwei’s words were really offensive. As if she couldn’t stay with Mr. Qin unless Cong Nianwei approved it! Huang Jiajia held her handbag so tight she almost tore it apart. “I don’t need your pity!” she sobbed. “I’m going back now!” Then she walked out without even looking back.

Qin Guan gestured at Cong Nian and followed Huang Jiajia, saying, “It’s better that you go back. I have work to do here. The afternoon session won’t be long though, so I’ll stick to my plan and

won't miss the class. I promise!"

Haung Jiajia looked at Qin Guan as she laughed angrily. "Go back to your girl, you fool!" she said before she left.

Qin Guan was confused. He had not expected Haung Jiajia to scold him under the circumstances. He could not figure out why she had.

When Qin Guan returned to the booth, he found Cong Nianwei sitting on the resting chair, reading a magazine quietly.

Delighted, he sat on the chair opposite Cong Nianwei and said, "Wait a minute, I'll talk to the director and ask him to allow me to work around the hall." Then he ran to the director to negotiate with him.

It took Qin Guan quite a few minutes to persuade the director to grant his request. The director asked Qin Guan to take a pile of advertising posters and stick some brand logos on his face and chest.

After checking that the logos were easy to stick and remove, Qin Guan asked the director for a few more as souvenirs.

When he was ready, he took the posters and told Cong Nianwei, "Okay, let's take a walk around the hall." Cong Nianwei put down the magazine and walked with Qin Guan.

They walked along the aisles of the hall. Qin Guan really stood out among the rest of the staff. Even though he was holding the posters in a casual way, he attracted people like a light bulb. Anyone interested would come up to him and ask for a poster, and Qin Guan would tell them where his booth was.

After a while, Cong Nianwei told Qin Guan in an amused way, “Have you noticed it’s usually mature women who ask you for a poster?”

Qin Guan looked at Cong Nianwei’s shiny black hair. He felt that something was off about what she’d said. In a short time, he had already handed out all his posters. Even the sticky notes in his hands were gone. Female customers had taken them to stick them to their faces and legs.

As they walked back to the booth, the director came and patted Qin Guan’s shoulder in excitement. Qin Guan was puzzled. The director said, “Qin, you did a very good job! I’ll ask the cashier to give you 200 yuan.”

Qin Guan looked at the director in bewilderment. The director pointed at the reception area, and Qin Guan saw some female customers who had asked for posters and sticky notes sitting there. Among the women, some were wine collectors and others were hotel managers. No matter how much the actual sale volume was, it had to be quite profitable for the exhibitor to win the approval of several luxurious hotels.

Qin Guan deserved the prize without a shadow of a doubt. The director decided to invite him more often to future exhibitions.

Qin Guan did not pretend to refuse the money. As the visitors started to leave, the exhibitors began to pack up for closing.

Taking the money from the cashier, Qin Guan held Cong Nianwei's hand and left the hall, ignoring the complaining staff.

Cong Nianwei made fun of Qin Guan, "Not bad, Qin Guan. You made a month's salary in a day." Qin Guan nodded and answered in a serious tone, "This is just the beginning. I wanna be a rich man someday."

Cong Nianwei burst into laughter. Qin Guan did not understand why she was laughing. He had not made a joke. Becoming rich was really his dream.



# Chapter 19: CET 4 And The Computer

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Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei went out and got on a bus. Qin Guan felt much more relaxed in his own clothes. He decided to get off at Xizhimen and have some hand-pulled noodles with Cong Nianwei.

Soon, they arrived at a noodle restaurant. When their noodles were served, Cong Nianwei laughed at Qin Guan, “You made quite a fortune today. Noodles! Is this your treat?”

Qin Guan was really hungry, because he had not eaten much at lunch. As he was swallowing his noodles, he told Cong Nianwei, “Give it a shot. They’re yummy. They taste like the noodles at the restaurant near our high school.”

Qin Guan had obviously not gotten her meaning. At the time, even the author had started to worry about his EQ. No wonder he had not officially become Cong Nianwei’s boyfriend.

Cong Nianwei thought Qin Guan was both cute and silly. She picked up some noodles and found that they were truly yummy.

The humble noodle restaurant located between used cell phone stores was inconspicuous. Despite its messy surroundings though, there were still no empty seats inside. The owner had set a table outside, but if that was also occupied, customers had to squat down and eat on the sidewalk. Some customers rode a bicycle there while others drove a car. Old customers would even get off their BMWs for a bowl of hand-pulled noodles, and squat down and eat by the roadside.

The noodles there were simple and coarse, but their taste was unforgettable. Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei stopped talking and emptied their bowls quickly. Putting down the bowls, they looked at each other and laughed out loud.

Qin Guan paid 10 yuan for the two bowls. It was cheap, but he and Cong Nianwei were fully satisfied. He saw off Cong Nianwei at the Xizhimen station, regretting that he had not gotten the chance to hold her hand.

Qin Guan was upset. He had been courting Cong Nianwei for almost a year now, but he had not won over her heart yet. Cong Nianwei would blow him off without a second thought. What was so wrong with him?

If Cong Nianwei had known what Qin Guan was thinking, she would have despised him. Ever since he had come to college, he had hardly ever called her. He even had a part-time job on the weekends. What irritated her more, was that Qin Guan had forgotten to officially confess his love for her. A girl would have to be a fool to say yes to him.

The life of a sloppy guy was always a hard one.

After his date, Qin Guan went to Huang Jiajia's home. It occurred to him that he might have pissed off the little girl earlier in the afternoon.

He went into the house nervously, but to his surprise, he found

that Huang Jiajia was quite well-behaved. She studied harder than ever and voluntarily asked Qin Guan to give her more assignments so she could exercise every day.

Qin Guan was still puzzled when he went back to campus. Huang Jiajia had behaved so well that he found it hard to adapt to the change. She had neither made fun of Qin Guan, nor moved purposely closer to him. It seemed like she had totally changed.

Of course, a rough guy like Qin Guan had soon forgotten all about it, but Huang Jiajia had gone through quite an interesting transformation.

She was actually at home right that moment, throwing away her clothes. She wrapped all her fashionable clothes in a coverlet and gave them to her mother, telling her that she could either donate them or give them to others as gifts. Either way, she would never wear those clothes again.

From that day on, Huang Jiajia decided to be a good girl. She had seen Cong Nianwei and how charmed Qin Guan had been by her.

Huang Jiajia was both upset and sad. She did not know why, but she knew Mr. Qin loved Cong Nianwei. He would never love a girl like her.

She was determined to change, though. She was still in her second year of high school, so it was not too late for her. She would study really hard and get accepted into CUFU, where Qin Guan was studying. She would never wear makeup or dress up again. She

wanted to be a comely girl like Cong Nianwei.

“When I get accepted into CUFU, I’ll be closer to Mr. Qin than she is. I’m younger than her, so I can wait for him to come back to me.”

That poor little thing, with her full lips and enchanting eyes... Her style was the total opposite of Cong Nianwei.

Huang Jiajia was desperate. She only wanted to get closer to Mr. Qin.

Huang Jiajia’s mother noticed that her little girl had given up those hideous clothes. She had also stopped dying her hair and wearing makeup. Instead, she was studying hard every day. Her mother felt both glad and relieved.

“Should I give a bonus to Mr. Qin? He did teach her well after all. Jiajia has stopped idling about. Even more surprisingly, she has started studying hard.”

Time flew. Qin Guan was leading a busy life, so a month passed by quickly. Before he knew it, it was already mid-November.

His life had gotten more regular now. He had finished his two part-time jobs at the exhibition and done some odd jobs as a promoter. His tutoring schedule was as regular as it had been, but Qin Guan did not allow himself to waste any time. During the day, he had classes and recited English words. He could recite the full

vocabulary of College English Test Band 4 (CET 4) from A to Z, and had already started to recite the vocabulary for CET 6.

Qin Guan's roommates wanted to sit CET 4 as early as possible. According to Qin Guan's experience, this was the best time for them to take the test. Therefore, all the boys in his dorm followed him in reciting English words.

CET 4 was in mid-December, so Qin Guan and his roommates submitted their applications in advance.

As a matter of fact, universities did not encourage students to sit the test in advance, because their passing grade was never satisfying. Qin Guan and his roommates were all top students in their classes, though.

No one studied as hard as top students in their first year of college. Ye Dong, the oldest boy in the dorm, had been studying hard in order to get elected as a member of the Students' Union, so he had never missed a class.

Qin Guan was both a top student and an enthusiastic reader. He went to every lecture and read a lot after class. Liu Xiaoyang had a high IQ, and Wang Lei studied harder than everyone.

As for Mu Lejiang and Li Jie, they maintained a good balance between studying and fun. They had never missed any of their classes in favor of having some leisure time.

Qin Guan thought that if he hadn't been reborn, he'd never have been able to catch up with the boys in his dorm.

When the boys had successfully completed their registration for CET 4, even their teachers had showed their approval.

On November 15, 1998, it was raining lightly. The breaking news in Qin Guan's dorm was that the six boys had carried in a computer. They all had chipped in and bought a computer from Zhongguancun.

Qin Guan had tried to stop the boys, but he had failed. Liu Xiaoyang had heard that Internet would soon be available in their dorm. For a gamer like Liu Xiaoyang, going to an Internet cafe on campus was too much trouble, so he had pestered everyone to buy a computer. He had paid the most because he was rich, but his roommates had also chipped in some money so they could use the computer to do research online.

When it came to computers, Qin Guan could not stop Liu Xiaoyang's craze. The young boy did not want to buy a popular brand either. Instead, he bought the most expensive one with the best gaming keyboard. There was even an extra memory bank in it.

Qin Guan really wanted to tell Liu Xiaoyang, "This computer will be outdated in a year. A memory bank's capacity is only 64 MB now. Do you know how fast computers are developing? By that time, you'll hate yourself."

Liu Xiaoyang did not care about that, though. After several

rounds of selecting, he finally picked a computer that cost more than 9,000 yuan. Liu Xiaoyang paid the 9,000 and the other boys shared the rest of the cost. Liu Xiaoyang was still quite satisfied.

“Look at the mouse pad! It’s limited edition!”

“Please, man. The shop owner gave it to you as a gift and told you it was limited edition. How could you even buy that?”

“Look at the laptop bag. It’s free!”

“Gee, you bought a desktop! The shop owner just gave you a laptop bag so you would buy a laptop in the future!”

Ignoring Qin Guan’s facial expressions, the boys excitedly carried the computer to their dorm and installed it together.

## Chapter 20: Abacus Level 5 And The First Pot Of Old City

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The first thing they did after the computer was on was install the games they'd gotten for free from the shopkeeper. The discs were most likely pirated ones that only cost 10 yuan each.

The games included Red Alert, Diablo, Legend of Sword and Fairy, and others. Qin Guan was very familiar with them. Even Wang Lei, the calmest boy in the dorm, was itching to play.

Qin Guan was not interested in these old games. He would rather read more in his leisure time instead. The boys were all playing the game though, and even boys from other dorms had come to take a look.

They were all watching Liu Xiaoyang play. Just watching him was exciting enough for them. They could tell how fascinating the games were.

Ever since they had bought the computer, more and more boys from other dorms would drop by and have fun in Qin Guan's dorm. Unintentionally, Qin Guan and his roommates had made more friends.

With their popularity, Ye Dong was able to apply successfully for a membership at the Students' Union and officially become a union member. He even became the leader of the freshmen.



Qin Guan had always been too handsome to have any male friends, and he had seldom talked to other boys, because they had known nothing about him. When they came to his dorm though, they found that Qin Guan was quite generous. Qin Guan made many new friends that way.

Now that he had been recognized by his male classmates, he had successfully become the Prince Charming of the freshmen. The boys had realized that they could not point fingers at anyone until they really knew them, and recognized Qin Guan for the friendly, generous boy that he was.

Playing games was not the only function of the computer, though. Qin Guan had installed an office software and urged every boy in his dorm to use it to do their bookkeeping.

Qin Guan's income from October to November was as follows.

Tutoring: ¥800 + ¥500 (bonus) = ¥1,300

Part-Time Job: ¥400 (Bateau Exhibition) + ¥200 (bonus) = ¥600;  
Pringles Promotion: ¥240; Total: ¥600 + ¥240 = ¥840

Total Income: ¥1,300 + ¥840 = ¥2,140

Qin Guan had also saved 100 yuan from the living expenses provided by his parents, so he had a total of ¥2,240 in savings from October to November.

Considering the money he had spent on treating his friends and buying the computer, Qin Guan was surprised to find that he had so much in savings.

He did not plan on doing any more part-time jobs in November though, because he would be taking two important tests in December, CET 4 and Abacus Level 5.

Qin Guan checked his schedule once again. Although the lectures were still ongoing, he had finished the Computerized Accounting Test in October, so he could now prepare for the Abacus Level 5 in December. In order to obtain an Accounting Certificate, he had to pass three subjects, i.e. Basic Accounting, Regulations and Professional Ethics, and Junior Computerized Accounting.

Abacus Level 5 was essential, so Qin Guan decided to give it a shot. His first plan was to obtain an Accounting Certificate during his sophomore year.

He had lots of plans, and realizing each of them was a small progress for him. He believed that as long as he followed his plan, he would make big progress in the end.

Cong Nianwei was quite inconsiderate. Qin Guan would meet her every day, but she would send him away, because she was also busy with her studies. As a student at the Department of Architecture, she knew that she had to study hard to learn the abstract and obscure principles of architecture.

She was too busy improving her sketching ability to spend time

with Qin Guan. What was love worth anyway? Love did not make money. Qin Guan hang up the phone with tears in his eyes. Courting a straight-A student was really giving him a hard time.

Huang Jiajia was also in a bad mood. She was upset with her straight-A teacher.

She had been working really hard lately to catch up, and she could at least understand the class now. She was delighted by her progress, but as she watched her teacher recite English vocabulary, she felt like her small progress was being overshadowed.

Before they knew it, it was already December. The six boys in Qin Guan's dorm were well-prepared. Taking their admission tickets, erasers and pens, they walked into the lecture theater to take CET 4 with the sophomores of CUFE.

The six boys made everybody else jealous. Before the bell rang, they had already finished their papers and handed them in.

As they walked out of the examination room, the boys relaxed. The exercises had been easy for them, and their reviewing work would help them get high marks, which would look great on their resumes.

Qin Guan's next test was Abacus Level 5. Wang Lei had also applied to take the test. The registration fee was 40 yuan per person, and the test would only take them 20 minutes. The test results would be published within three days, and then they would get their certificate.

Qin Guan and Wang Lei kept practicing calculating on an abacus, and every day they would say “Goodbye” and “Welcome back” in their dorm, as if they were real accountants. When the day of the test came around, they headed to the examination room.

Qin Guan was quite familiar with abacuses. He was actually so skillful that the proctor thought he was a professional accountant. If Qin Guan had known what the proctor was thinking, he would tell him that it was because of his amazing memory.

When the two boys went out of the room with their abacuses, they were not able to compare their answers, because the test papers had consisted of two different types, i.e. A and B, to prevent the students from cheating.

Qin Guan took a deep breath. He could finally relax until winter vacation. He would do fewer part-time jobs during that time and would rest more.

As soon as they walked out of the room, the two boys went to the First Pot of Old City. Qin Guan’s roommates had decided to celebrate their success in CET 4 there. Frankly, the boys were just looking for an excuse to eat out instead of going to the school canteen, as they usually did.

The nearest First Pot of Old City was located at North Taipingzhuang. Qin Guan and his roommates all rode their bicycles to the restaurant along Sanhuan Road.

For foodies like them, riding for several kilometers was as easy as pie. They rode fast along the road, heading straight for the lamb spines at the First Pot of Old City.

It was lunch time when they got there, so there were hardly any empty seats in the restaurant. The waiter put a white towel on his shoulder as he saw the boys drooling over. He felt sorry for them, so he carried several stools from the kitchen so they could take a seat by the door. That was why that restaurant was so popular. No other restaurant in Beijing would let the customers have dinner there if they could not find a seat.

The boys did not care, though. They all took a seat by the door. It was really crowded inside, so Qin Guan knew it would take them quite a while to find a seat. He murmured to Ye Dong and Liu Xiaoyang, and the three boys went in.

The other three boys were still by the door, looking confused. They looked at each other before they turned to the three boys inside.

Qin Guan looked around and saw that a table would be available in a few minutes. He immediately stood by the table with Ye Dong and Liu Xiaoyang. The boys did not talk, but Liu Xiaoyang expressed his yearning for food through his eyes, which were fixed on the leftovers on the table.

Ye Dong, who was the oldest boy in the dorm, hit Liu Xiaoyang on the head and shouted, "Have you never seen food before? Did you starve to death in a past life?"

Liu Xiaoyang whined. Shielding his head with his hands, he answered, "I'm really hungry, okay?"

Then it was Qin Guan's turn. Dragging Ye Dong away, he said, "Xiaoyang is too young. He just wants some food. There's no need to beat him."

The customers eating at the table were all mid-aged and seemed very kind. Among them was an elderly woman. As the woman looked at poor Liu Xiaoyang, her maternal instinct took over. When she saw Ye Dong force Liu Xiaoyang to control his yearning, she felt sad for the little boy.

The people at the table had almost finished their meal and had been planning on having some small talk before leaving. When they saw that boy though, they all felt pity for him.

One of them said, "Hey, boys. Don't look so serious. Ask the waiter to clean up the table. We're done."

Qin Guan looked at them and expressed his deep gratitude through his eyes. He glanced at the table and found a plate of garland chrysanthemum that had not been eaten. Embarrassed, he said, "That's alright. We can still wait for a while."

The elder woman looked unhappy at the thought. "No, we're full. Look at this little boy! He's crying of hunger!"

Qin Guan thanked them right away, "Thank you so much, brothers and sisters." The woman seemed amused by Qin Guan. Smiling, she said, "What a cute a boy. Sister? I must be as old as your mom. Never mind, help yourselves. We gotta go."

When the customers left and the table was cleaned up, Qin Guan waved to the other three boys by the door, gesturing for them to come over for lunch.

The six boys took a seat and piously ordered a big lamb spine hot pot and eight plates of instant-boiled meat and vegetables. Food always tasted best when people were hungry.

When the pot was served, everyone held their chopsticks and waited anxiously for the broth to boil. The sauce-dipped lamb spine with the secret gravy was boiled in a charcoal pot, and the special fragrance of the lamb and the spices filled the air.

As soon as the broth in the pot boiled, the boys rushed to eat the lamb spines.

The lamb spines were not just tasty, they had also been cooked properly. As Qin Guan picked up one and shook it in his plate, the meat dropped right away. Qin Guan was feeling quite proud of himself when he saw Mu Ledjiang pick up some more spines and put them on his plate.

The other boys had seen it too. Suddenly, they could not wait anymore. They all started picking up spines and putting them on their own plates. Seeing the boys' table manners, the old lady next

to them moved her chair a little further away.

When the boys had eaten up all the lamb spines, they asked the waiter to put some extra soup into the pot. The milky soup and the secret gravy were mixed together, exuding a tempting smell.

The boys did not eat the lamb bones. Instead, they poured the instant-cooked meat into the pot and stared at each other. When the color of the meat changed into dark brown and the meat floated in the soup, the boys started their second round of grabbing.

It was getting dark, and the boys were all full, their bellies looking big and round. When they paid the bill, they found that they had not spent more than 30 yuan each.

They got on their bicycles, ready to ride back to CUFE, but they were too full to do it anymore. What a heroic feat they had performed!



# Chapter 21: Holding Her Soft Hand

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There was a lot of chatter as Christmas drew near. Qin Guan was quite nervous during that season, something his roommates were unable to understand.

It was Friday, December 25th. A cloudy Christmas.

It's just a foreign custom, whose only social reflection is Christmas tree decorations in the mall. What the hell are you so excited for?

Qin Guan was brushing his teeth in front of the mirror, thinking to himself helplessly.

For future reference, if you don't invite your girlfriend for dinner at Christmas, you might as well get ready to get dumped.

Qin Guan finished rinsing his mouth and looked around. No one had taken notice of him. He cupped his hands over his face and blew on them. Well done! His breath was clear and smelled of mint. Everything was ready except Cong Nianwei.

They had arranged a meeting time on the phone a long time ago. The plan was to visit a diner on Christmas night in the Modern Plaza on the North Third Ring Road.

It was cloudy and dark outside at six o'clock in the evening. However, nothing could influence Qin Guan's good mood. There

was a shining, tall Christmas tree on the square in front of the plaza, creating a festive atmosphere.

As the night fell, the square was lit up by colorful lights. People walked under the Christmas tree, stopping now and then to admire it.

At the time, Christmas Day, was a fashionable festivity. The lower middle class would have dates or enjoy teatime, while working people kept going about their business.

This Christmas was incomparably comfortable, lacking any wide advertisements and seasonal businesses.

This is the scene that greeted Cong Nianwei when she arrived at the entrance of the Modern Plaza.

A tall young boy, wearing a slim woolen coat, black straight pants and shining black leather shoes was looking around. He seemed lost in thought as he held a bouquet of beautiful roses in his hands. He attracted many a passerby's attention.

Looking at Qin Guan dressed so handsomely, Cong Nianwei burst into laughter. He was reminding her of something.

Qin Guan was looking around the entrance when he saw Cong Nianwei walking towards him from a distance. He was so excited that he forgot the roses in his hands and raised his arms to wave at her.

Petals fell down miserably. Qin Guan was taken aback. He put down the bouquet to check on them.

By then, Cong Nianwei had reached him. Smiling and pointing to the roses in Qin Guan's hands, she asked, "Are those for me?"

"Ye...Yes." Absorbed in her smile, Qin Guan handed the roses to Cong Nianwei with a blank expression as he said in a low voice, "Merry Christmas."

Cong Nianwei took a deep sniff of the flowers and said, "Thank you, I appreciate it. So Comrade Qin, what shall we do next?"

Qin Guan beamed with joy and said, "Dinner, definitely. Delicious dinner."

Cong Nianwei followed Qin Guan, crossing the road diagonally and heading near the Beijing Institute of Technology.

There was a T.G.I.Friday's located there, a renowned western style restaurant suitable for young people. The atmosphere inside was festive. They pushed the door loudly and gave their reservation number. Then Qin Guan led Cong Nianwei leisurely to their reserved table. When they were seated, the waiter appeared with two menus. He stood there waiting to take their order.

Cong Nianwei read the menu but could not make a decision. She looked up and asked Qin Guan, "Are you familiar with the

restaurant? What are their specialties?”

Qin Guan raised his head from the menu and said, “They have some famous dishes. Would you like to try one?”

Cong Nianwei agreed with a nod. Qin Guan snapped his fingers towards the waiter, who ran over. He was wearing more than 20 accessories from head to toe, and they all jangled as he squatted next to their table.

Yes, you didn’t misread. The squatting service was one of the restaurant’s features. The servants played a leading role using their body language. They would actually squat by the customers or lean on the table to help them decide on their order. All this served to indicate that you didn’t have to straighten your clothes or sit properly there.

Qin guan was really straightforward. He gave the waiter a long list.

Buffalo Wings, Baby Back Ribs, [Fajitas](#), and a Chicken Caesar Salad.

a kind of Mexican staple food. It is the mixture of guacamole, cheese, soft cheese, Mexican tomato and chili sauce and special Mexico corn-flour pancake.

“What would you prefer, soup or a soft drink, Cong Nianwei? Would you like that?” Holding his menu, Qin Guan grinned at her enticingly. He pointed to the bar beside their table, where a bartender was performing fancy mixtures of drinks.

Cong Nianwei glanced at the menu and said, “Long Island Iced Tea, please.”

Qin Guan saw that there was alcohol in Iced Tea, and that made him smile to himself. He ordered two cups of Iced Tea and an extra serving of Baked Sweet Potato Skins.

Slow American country music was playing as the bartender performed on the customers’ request.

Cong Nianwei pulled her chair closer to the table. She supported her jaw with both hands, enjoying the gentle music and having a good time.

Qin Guan was extremely satisfied with his effort that day.

She accepted my roses! She’s having a meal with me!

It was a good beginning for what would follow.

Their meal was served quickly. They ate lazily. There wasn’t as much courtesy there as in formal western restaurants. Customers could do anything they wished. You could even grab your ribs with your bare hands without feeling embarrassed.

They dined and wine to satisfaction and enjoyed another song before they stood up to go.

Cong Nianwei waited for Qing Guan to take care of the check with the cashier by the door. Then she asked, "What next?"

Qin Guan stammered, "Eh, I'm full. Shall we go for a walk?"

As soon as he finished his sentence, he felt the impulse to slap himself in the face. Full? You dull homeboy!

Cong Nianwei giggled. It's really great to be with Qin Guan. She nodded and waved the roses around. "Let's go for a walk. I'm full, too."

Following Cong Nianwei, Qin Guan boxed himself in the ear gently. His original plan had been to take Cong Nianwei to the plaza and buy a fluffy sheep for her. Once she was happy, it would be easy for him to make a confession.

But then he'd said that silly thing.

Qin Guan was walking in low spirits when he heard Cong Nianwei cry out in surprise. She had just pushed the door open. "It's snowing!"

Qin Guan hurried outside and saw the thick snow.

It must have been snowing for quite a while. Large snowflakes covered the ground, creating a thick layer of snow. Qing Guan

stepped forward and found his shoes stuck in the snow. It reached as high as his vamps.

They lost the mood to take a leisurely walk. The snowfall seemed to get heavier.

Qin Guan offered his hand to Cong Nianwei as he said, “The snow is thick. Follow my steps and hold my hand. Be careful not to slip.”

Cong Nianwei was taken aback. She pursed her lips and smiled, “Okay. Take my hand.”

Qin Guan helped Cong Nianwei cross the road carefully. When they reached the bus stop, he realized something. I have held her hand.

At the thought of this, his hand suddenly became sweaty. Thank God! Thank the God of Snow. I’ll burn three incense sticks in your honor tomorrow!

Qin Guan didn’t care about anything else as he held her hand by the bus stop. He pretended to watch the buses. Cong Nianwei tried to pull her hand away gently, but failed. She glanced at Qin Guan and decided to let it be.

## Chapter 22: The 1998 Snowfall

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They waited at the bus stop for more than half an hour. The snow was getting heavier and heavier while more and more people gathered there. Finally, a bus stopped. Qin Guan signaled to Cong Nianwei decisively. We have to squeeze inside!

The bus was overcrowded. The driver shouted to the people outside, "Wait for the next one. Don't try to squeeze in!"

Ignoring his words, Qin Guan took advantage of the passengers exiting from the back door and helped Cong Nianwei up. Then he took a large step forward himself to get in before the doors closed.

When the bus took off, Qin Guan suddenly swayed. He was squeezed up against the door, his face stuck to the glass. He probably looked like a flattened toad from the outside.

Qin Guan couldn't care less though. He pulled closer Cong Nianwei, who was squeezed up against the stairs beside the door, and protected her with his arms.

The fact that he had an ulterior motive besides courage prevented him from hugging her tight. All he could do was lean his arms against the door, creating a limited space for the two of them to stand.

The door opened and shut. The snow was getting heavier and heavier while the bus moved at walking speed. Perhaps you're wondering why they hadn't taken a taxi.



It was because there were no taxis on the roads. The taxi drivers in the capital were shrewd. Cars couldn't run fast under such heavy snowfall, so it would have taken them a whole night to complete a single ride. Who would be foolish enough to drive out in that weather?

Better stay home and watch TV while they enjoyed some [Erguotou](#). Take a sip of liquor. Now, that's nice.

Erguotou is a Chinese alcoholic beverage with high alcohol content (about 60% in volume).

Back to our story now, the shabby bus clanked as it reached the south entrance of Tsinghua University. Qin Guan was the first to jump off when the bus came to a stop. His legs were suddenly buried in the snow. It was snowing so heavily that the snow on the ground reached his calves.

Qin Guan offered his hand. Cong Nianwei took it and stepped off the bus carefully. They both looked dishevelled after leaving the crowded bus.

The roses in Cong Nianwei's hands had been flattened. One of them trembled before it finally shed its last petal.

They looked at each other and burst into happy laughter amid the falling snowflakes.

When their laughter died down, they began to worry. It was

windy and still snowing heavily. Cong Nianwei almost slipped in her high heels as she took a few steps.

Qin Guan pulled her close. Then he squatted in front of her and patted his back, inviting her to jump on.

Cong Nianwei didn't blush. She just climbed confidently on Qin Guan's back like the clear-cut straight-A student that she was. She had already calculated the speed she could reach under the circumstances.

Qin Guan moved forward with unsteady steps while Cong Nianwei sprawled on his back, doing nothing at all. Now and then she smoothed his hair with her fingers and pushed the snow off his back.

Everything was quiet in the snowy night except for Qin Guan's heavy breathing. Cong Nianwei gently pressed her face to his back.

She didn't know when the boy's back had become so broad and thick. He seemed to have grown up when she wasn't looking.

Though tired, Qin Guan felt so hot he could see pink bubbles appear in front of him. Cong Nianwei's body felt soft against his back. At this thought, a real bubble came out of his nose.

Qin Guan had worn a thin woolen coat to show off. It was a windy, snowy night and the biting northwest wind blew through his clothes relentlessly.

Qin Guan's body reacted naturally, tears and snot making an appearance as a result of the wind and the cold.

In the quiet night, the only sounds were those of his heavy breathing and his runny nose.

When they arrived outside Cong Nianwei's dormitory building, Qin Guan's face was covered in an icy shell made of tears, snot and cold air.

If there had been another reborn person standing by, they might have found that scene familiar. He looked like Iron Man, except his mask was made of crystal and ice instead of iron.

Despite the frozen muscles on his face, Qin Guan managed to squeeze some words out, "It's snowing heavily. Go back to your room quickly and warm up. You don't want to catch a cold."

Before Cong Nianwei could answer, he added in a rush, "I'm going home. I'll call you tomorrow." Then he just went off without looking back.

Cong Nianwei was taken aback. She felt confused. She looked at the shabby flowers in her hands, arranged the wrapping paper, and turned around to enter the dormitory building. There was a faint smile on the corner of her mouth.

Qin Guan left the Tsinghua University campus and headed

directly towards a shining “Hotel” sign without hesitation.

The chances of coming across a bus or a car were extremely low. Qin Guan could hardly see the road clearly through the blizzard. He encountered no cars or people on the way.

He dusted the snow off his body before he entered the hotel.

There were two affordable rooms available. Qin Guan asked the receptionist for the key right away. He went into the room, took off his clothes and socks, which had already been soaked, and had an unsatisfying hot shower.

When he came out of the bathroom, he realized that he didn't have any spare underwear.

He covered his body with a bath towel and placed the wet clothes side by side on the radiator. (Luckily, the radiator was so hot it could warm up a jug of water.)

After doing all this, Qin Guan wiped his hair dry, threw the towel away and got into bed naked.

The room was warm. Qin Guan, who had carried a person on his back the whole way, felt terribly tired. He fell asleep in a daze and had a dream.

He dreamed that it hadn't snowed that day and that Cong Nianwei had accepted his proposal to become his girlfriend.

His nice dream was interrupted by the alarm clock on his cell phone, which reminded him that it was morning and he had to get up.

Qin Guan threw back the covers, went to the radiator in his slippers and touched his underwear and socks. They were all dry.

He felt refreshed after putting on his clothes. The day before he had had a runny nose, but his young body had already recovered. Last night's sleep had cheered him up.

Qin Guan took out his phone, looked at the screen and smiled like silly. Seeing Cong Nianwei's call from her dormitory, Qin Guan felt full of energy.

He walked in the thick show under the bright sun, considering his plans for the future. There's the exams at the end of term in January, and then winter vacation. Only one month to go. Would that be enough time to get a driver's license?

What had happened the day before had taught Qin Guan a painful lesson. Although he already knew how to drive, he realized that he had to take the exam again. Since the process is relatively simple, I should be able to get my license as soon as possible.

Qin Guan decided it on the spot. He turned right in front of the hotel and saw an advertisement board at the gate of a small grocery store. It read "Driving Courses For You. Enroll Now."

Qin Guan knocked on the window of the grocery store, and a simple, honest-looking middle-aged woman emerged. Realizing what Qin Guan wanted, she brought out the driving course material right away.

There were three training schools on the list. Qin Guan wasn't picky about choosing. He just pointed at the Haidian Driving School and said, "That one."

The owner of the grocery store was pretty straightforward too. She filled out a form in no time and told Qin Guan what the fees were. The courses would begin the following week.

The whole matter was settled, and Qin Guan staggered back to his dormitory, where all his roommates had been waiting for him to report back.

Crying silent tears in his mind, Qin Guan thought to himself, How can I tell you guys that all I did the whole night was just hold her hand for a while? How can I tell you I slept in a shabby hotel alone?

Qin Guan avoided answering their questions. After being beaten by the others, he ended the conversation in a mopish mood.

## Chapter 23: The First Photo Shoot

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Nobody dared be lazy during their spare time as the first term exams drew near. Although they were all straight-A students, they were much more nervous than they used to be.

They were aiming for a scholarship in their own department, which constituted the majority of straight-A students' income.

Qin Guan had just hung up from checking on Cong Nianwei when his cell phone rang again.

He picked up the phone and saw an unfamiliar number shining on the screen. He was confused as he rarely received any calls from anyone other than his parents and friends.

A melodic voice came out of the receiver when Qin Guan answered it, "Is this Qin Guan?"

Pressing the phone to his ear, Qin Guan answered, "Yes, that's me. Who is this?"

"Hello. Do you know Master Zhao?" the woman on the other end of the line asked.

"Master Zhao?"

"Didn't you model for red wine once? Master Zhao was the tailor

adjusting the suits for you.”

What she was saying was ringing a bell. “Yes, I remember,” he said, “What about him?”

“Master Zhao referred you to me. I’m calling you to ask whether you have some spare time tomorrow. We’re making an advertising booklet and we’re in search of a college student who wants to work as a model.”

Qin Guan checked his schedule. He had turned down a part-time job just this week. With all the snow outside, there was nothing he could have done about it. But since this job had fallen into his lap, he could at least give it a try.

Qin Guan set a time and place for the interview with the woman, and waved the phone in front of his roommates smugly.

His roommates ground their teeth in resentment. They pulled his cheek and legs, demanding a treat if Qin Guan succeeded in the interview.

One of them was still sitting in his bed calmly. He pushed his glasses up and looked at Qin Guan. “You could make a living on your looks. I’ll take the national scholarship in your stead.”

While he struggled against the others, Qin Guan said forcefully, “It’s not the time to make a decision yet. Plus, I can be both handsome and intelligent.”



Angry with his arrogance, his roommates punched him, beating him into the ground while they yelled, “You lucky dog. You can’t be a savage anymore!”

The next morning, Qin Guan arrived at Chao Yang Park, where a small studio made shooting advertisements for booklets.

The small cabin was already crowded when Qin Guan walked in.

A busy-looking man pointed at a random place for Qin Guan to go and try on some shirts.

The advertisement today was for a phone-order clothing company. Despite the large audience, the advertisement’s taste was quite poor. The brand was in the telemarketing business. Customers watched the advertisement and placed orders through the telephone. The factory sent the goods and got paid on delivery.

The trademark of the brand was its fine quality and reasonable price. It mimicked styles from other brands and produced a good sales volume.

However, the new line, which was marketed towards young people, didn’t go well with the former model of the company, who looked like Iron Man.

The CEO had banged on his desk. We should look for a new model and make a new advertisement!

He looked confident while the marketing department looked quite depressed. That line of shirts did not play a big part in the company's turnover. A short advertisement would be more than enough. A specialized model company would be just a waste of money.

The marketing manager had an idea. He remembered the intermediary model agents and Sister Xue, who did business on her own.

In her earlier days, Xue Wanyi had been a model herself. However, she had retreated from the spotlight after a couple of years because she felt like it was a limitation on her image. Using her unparalleled socializing skills, she had acquainted herself with a group of people like her, as well as some less famous models. Some of them had appeared on runway shows, while others had been featured in print ads.

Her friends were active on the bottom of the fashion industry. They came from all corners of the country. It was people nobody would even imagine.

After adjusting suits for several shows, Master Zhao had gotten to know Xue Wanyi and had become very good friends with her. If he came across any independent young men, he would refer them to her.

That was why Qin Guan had gotten that call.

At the time, Sister Xue's models had all failed the interview, so she had called Qin Guan as a last resort.

As Qin Guan was standing in line to be interviewed, his phone rang. Before he could even answer it though, he was stopped by Sister Xue, who had followed the sound of his ringtone. "Are you Qin Guan? I'm Sister Xue."

"Hello, Sister Xue. I'm here for the interview. Is there anything I should know?" Qin Guan asked as he shook hands with her.

Sister Xue was very straightforward. She informed Qin Guan about the guidelines while she expressed her enthusiasm about his appearance.

There were still several candidates waiting in front of Qin Guan, so Xue Wanyi talked with him at length about intermediate agents, handling fees and so on.

Qin Guan told her quite honestly, "Sister Xue, I'm a freshman at college. This is only a part-time job for me. I can only do it in my free time. I can't work on weekdays."

Sister Xue was already running her hands up and down Qin Guan's body. She pinched here and there. He had great potential. I can't let him go.

Sister Xue finished her evaluation. She was sure of Qin Guan's performance.

Suddenly, it was Qin Guan's turn. The marketing manager held a pink shirt up to his body and waved to him, "Okay. You might pass."

Sister Xue and Qin Guan's mouths dropped open at the man's playful tone.

They went to the makeup department, both of them looking confused. Sister Xue mumbled non-stop beside Qin Guan, "They bullied me! They were so strict with my models, yet they let you go so easily."

In fact, the marketing manager was also feeling gloomy. Where's the energy of the youth? A group of heavily-powdered female models and mollycoddles. Are you kidding me?

Qin Guan's clean face made him the shining star of the group.

The hairdresser was a freelancer who often worked on print ad shooting sites. As his fingers touched Qin Guan's face, he couldn't bear to apply makeup on it. It would be a tragedy to put makeup on such good skin.

In the end, he only applied some light makeup with a thin powder to emphasize the angles of Qin Guan's face. Then he swiped his eyebrows carefully and asked him to change his clothes right away.

At the time, the photo studio was empty. The interviews had ended and most idlers had left. Qin Guan put a different shirt on. It was exactly his size, as if it had been made especially for him.

Most people did not look good in pink. Ordinary people wearing pink tended to look like hillbillies. Qin Guan though was among those few who could pull off the color.

The shirt was junior style with a round low hemline and a high collar. Qin Guan buttoned up carefully, leaving the hem outside his jeans and strolling to the center of the studio with his hands in pockets.

When the photographer saw Qin Guan, he asked the lighting engineer and his assistant to get ready. Then he picked up the camera and made a few adjustments.

Two photos would be enough for the advertisement. One of them would be the whole front image and the other the bust. It was pretty simple.

The bust image was taken first. Following the photographer's directions, Qin Guan stood at the appointed position, moving his sleeve up with ease.

He had to roll his sleeve first to one side and then to the other on request.

The photographer kept shouting directions, "Right... Well done.

Pay more attention. Hold your arm up. Right... Keep it there. Curve your arm inside. Right, hold it. That's right..."

The first series of photos was finished in less than ten minutes. The photographer made the playback as the people backstage checked the photos.

A bright, handsome boy was smiling warmly against the light. The pink shirt he wore fit his body well. The collar had been fixed with care, giving the impression of comfort and safety.

The boy in the picture was about to do something. He exposed his left arm gently. His slender beautiful fingers were unfastening the cuff on his shirt. The small buttons between his fingers looked delicate.

Dramatically, Qin Guan's movements had boosted a 100-Yuan shirt to a second-rate brand. Customers interested in petty bourgeoisie leisure shirts were bound to place an order.

The marketing manager felt satisfied at the sight of the photos. Is this perhaps the transformation of our company from a local country business to a fashionable mainstream brand?

## Chapter 24: Barbeque On Principal Filter

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The second series would be more difficult. Qin Guan's whole body had to be in the shots. On one side, the photos had to show the perfect matching effect of the shirts, while on the other, the customers had to be able to see how comfortable the shirts were.

After listening to the marketing manager's requests, Qin Guan and the photographer had a short discussion. They decided that Qin Guan would take some jumping shots.

Most shirt advertisements for direct sales were quite stiff. Just a standing posture, and that was it.

The photographer asked Qin Guan to jump. Since these were shirts for young men, the advertisement didn't have to be conservative.

Qin Guan unbuttoned his shirt down to the second button on his chest and rolled up his sleeves.

Both the spotlight and photographer were ready. Qin Guan followed the photographer's directions. "Good. Look this way. Well done. Ready? One, two, three, jump!"

At his signal, Qin Guan leapt up on the spot. He opened his arms and jumped high in the air in an effortless manner.

While he was up, he didn't think about the shooting at all.

Maybe he was distracted by his hunger. It had been a long day. It had to be around lunchtime. On that thought, Qin Guan's eyes went blank. He was eager to eat.

The photographer was over the moon. He had snapped some excellent photos. The model on stage jumped high with slim, straight legs. His eyes looked blank and confused as he looked into the distance. He seemed to be longing for freedom, holding his arms out like he was trying to embrace the sky.

Click, click. By the time Qin Guan landed back on the floor, the photographer had taken lots of photos. Checking the effect of them, he was beside himself with excitement.

As an unknown photographer who made a living by taking part-time jobs, he had always dreamed of being an artist.

He had finished his job for the day. I don't care what people say. Dignity is nothing compared to art.

The photographer went up to Qin Guan, "Hey man, can I have a word with you?"

Qing Guan was thinking of food as he took his shirt off. Since the photographer had started the conversation, he could do nothing but reply politely, "What is it? Tell me."

The photographer put his hands together in a begging gesture.



“Could I take another series of photos? Not too many. Just a couple of shots would be enough.”

Qin Guan looked at the marketing manager nearby. The manager shrugged to show his confusion before he turned to stare at the photographer doubtfully.

The photographer made a deep bow as he went on, “I want to take several photos for myself. I don’t have much money. I could pay you 50 Yuan per picture. I swear I won’t use the photos for business.”

Qin Guan stopped taking off his clothes as he answered, “But I don’t have any formal clothes with me. How would you shoot me?”

His words seemed to give hope to the photographer, who answered happily, “You don’t need to change clothes. This shirt is okay.” Stealing a glance at the marketing manager, he continued, “You could just wear it this way. Go to the wooden pillar and pose randomly. Just a couple of shots will be fine.”

Qin Guan took pity on him. It wasn’t hard work for him anyway. He left the buttons of his shirt unfastened as he walked up to the pillar. He leaned his elbow on the pillar and supported his left hip against it.

That pose saved him a lot of energy. He was too hungry to stand straight. In the camera, he was leaning slightly on the traditional wooden pillar in a lazy, wanton manner. The expression in his eyes

was gloomy and helpless. The open shirt covered his naked chest lazily, looking sexy and wild.

Click, click.

The photographer was too excited to stop. After snapping pictures for a long time, he finally shouted, “Okay! Cut!”

At his words, Qin Guan let go of the pillar. The photographer and the marketing manager joined him.

They gathered to talk money.

According to common policy, such a small gig could cost somewhere between RMB 800 yuan and 1500 yuan. Thanks to his excellent performance, Qin Guan naturally ranked at the highest price. The marketing manager gave RMB 1500 yuan to Xue Wanyi.

As his agent, Xue Wanyi shared half of Qin Guan’s salary.

Qin Guan watched helplessly the pile of bills going around, getting only half of it himself.

The photographer paid him next. He had selected six photos, each costing 50 yuan. He gave Qin Guan 300 yuan and a simple photo use agreement.

The agreement stated that the photos could only be used in the

Capital Figure Photography Competition and were not allowed to be used for any other business.

When everything was settled, Qin Guan could hardly wait to get out of there with his 1050 yuan. He was starving.

Relying solely on his body, he walked out of the studio and headed directly for the Chaoyang Park west entrance. He was craving some barbeque. He'd kill anybody who got between him and the barbecue restaurant.

Before reaching it, he bumped into the marketing manager, who was just driving off. He shouted to Qin Guan, who stared at him with hungry eyes.

His sunken heart shouted loudly. What's the matter, bro? The marketing manager dragged a huge black plastic bag out of his trunk and handed it to Qin Guan.

"Take it. It's extra benefit," he said before he waved at him and drove away.

Qin Guan entered the barbeque restaurant holding the black bag. He called for the waiter and ordered a long list of dishes.

Salty lamb with cumin. Beef fat. Marbled pork. Sweet potato slices. Onion slices.

Under the surprised gaze of the waiter, Qin Guan recited his

order in one breath.

The young waiter couldn't help it. He reminded Qin Guan in a low voice, "Don't you think that's a little too much?"

Qin Guan waved him off, "Not nearly. Serve me quickly. Quick, quick, quick. Run!"

Shocked by his energy, the waiter ran to the kitchen to place the order. Qin Guan drank the free barley tea that was on the table in hopes that several sips of tea would help soothe his stomach.

He opened the black bag the manager had given him only to find that it was full of brand new shirts.

Thinking back, Qin Guan realized they were the try-on shirts for interviewees that day.

He had been selected for the job too soon to give the others a chance to try on the shirts.

Naturally the shirts had been left there, and it was not worth driving back to factory just to return them, so the manager had given them to Qin Guan as a gift.

Looking around, Qin Guan tied the bag again. This was typical eating in and taking home the leftovers behavior. He felt shy to both make money and receive a gift.

While Qin Guan looked unhappy with his wretched appearance, his food was served plate by plate.

Scared by Qin Guan's eagerness, the waiter ran up to him with the plates. He also served the coal stove dishes first.

Rubbing his hands, Qin Guan held the barbecue agrafe and took all the meat and placed it on the plate with a ripping sound.

Everyone would understand that Qin Guan was enjoying barbeque on principal filter.

The old capital barbeque on principal filter was dating back to 1686, the 25th year of the Kangxi reign. Its history was longer than 320 years.

People in the capital made a plate with iron bars called a principal filter. Using fruit wood charcoal or pine wood charcoal to heat up the filter, people placed pickled beef or lamb slices on it and turned them over using long chopsticks. The meat on the filter released its grease when it was done.

Soon the room was filled with the smell of barbeque, which only increased Qin Guan's appetite even more.

He placed the cooked meat on a plate using the iron agrafe while he placed the marble pork on the filter piece by piece. As he waited for the pork to be cooked, he stuffed the meat on the plate into his

mouth.

The secret recipe sauce poured into the Mongolian Lamb as the taste of caraway seasoning filled Qin Guan's mouth.

Qin Guan was too busy cooking and eating. The waiter was sympathetic and helped him cook the meat so he could have enough time to eat in peace.

Qin Guan buried his head in food for nearly half an hour until his stomach was half-full. Then he breathed out and looked up, thinking to himself, "I nearly died of hunger, but I survived once again."

Smiling at the waiter, who was helping with the cooking, Qin Guan asked him to assist the other customers. Now that he wasn't starving anymore, he could enjoy cooking.

Staring at Qin Guan's face, the young waiter pursed his lips in embarrassment. He passed the agrafe over to Qin Guan and ran away in a rush.

When the stomach was full, the heart was satisfied. Qin Guan finished the meat leisurely. He had to try to squeeze the big plastic bag onto the bus on his way back to campus.

## Chapter 25: The Driving License Exam

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Qin Guan entered the dormitory and called for the others to gather around as he took out the shirts. When he had them try them on, they looked kind of weird. The shirts were not their size.

The shirt had looked good on Qin Guan, but the eldest two of his roommates were both tall and muscular.

The length of the shirts was good, but instead of being baggy like they were supposed to, the shirts were a really tight fit on their bodies.

Their bulging chest muscles looked like they were about to tear the shirts open, making them look like tyrannosaurs.

Qin Guan turned to see his other two roommates. Great, with those dragging sleeves they could be playing a role in Peking Opera. The lower hem was so loose that the shirts looked like skirts. Their every movement showcased the literary excellence of scholars. Plus, the wind under the hem meant that they had to move carefully.

As for his last roommate, Qin Guan couldn't even bear to see him. He looked like he was wearing a dress. They all took off the shirts resentfully and returned them to Qin Guan. They were all irritated. His perfect standard figure was too provoking.

While they were fighting in good fun, Qin Guan informed them that he would start driving lessons the following week. He was

beaten once again. All of them decided to take driving lessons as well.

Qin Guan was inspired. That's it. We can make a group purchase. His roommates were all confused. Qin Guan remembered that there was no such concept at the time. He readily promised the others that he would help them arrange things.

On that weekend, the countryside grocery store owner got a big deal. Qin Guan, who was already a customer, arrived with four more students. One of Qin Guan's roommates had not brought an ID and could not register.

The owner sent the other five on the bus to the driving school with a big smile. Then he turned to calculate the fees for this deal.

They arrived at the Haidian Driving School on the swaying bus. They felt something strange while they were getting off the vehicle.

The area was a big bare space between the urban area and the countryside. There were several abandoned cars parked there and an endless wasteland beyond the entrance. There were only some vendor pancake stands and a couple of sheds made of broken wood to remind visitors that they were near civilization.

They followed the person in charge of the driving school to a small table. There was a queue in front of it for paying. Qin Guan pulled the person aside and talked to them in whispers. After a heated discussion, the meeting ended.



The five of them got a discount for their tuition. The original price had been 2200 yuan each. They paid 1980 yuan each, saving more than 200 yuan.

The person in charge had also promised Qin Guan that if he brought more students, he would pay him a 3% commission.

Qin Guan shared the exciting news with the others right away, making them hiss in resentment.

After paying the tuition fees, they asked Qin Guan for a treat.

Qin Guan walked directly to the pancake stand by the entrance and ordered one pancake with two eggs for each of them.

The old woman behind the stand gaped at the deal. Taking up the wooden oil can, she wiped the iron plate again and again until it was so oily it was shining. Then the woman took a spoon, scooped up a spoonful of batter, poured it onto the plate and spread it out with a small spatula.

The batter got thinner and thinner until it had finally covered the whole plate. The old woman scattered sesame and brushed sauce onto the pancake before flipping it over. Then she turned to them, “Do you want anything else? A fried breadstick or a crisp fritter?”

A fried breadstick? You didn't misread, my friend. In the earlier

days, pancakes were often served with a fried breadstick. That might not happen anymore, but this was a traditional style pancake.

They all shouted together, “A fried breadstick!” A cold fried breadstick was quite different from a freshly fried one. It was soft and elastic, and if you bit on it too hard, it could paste onto your face.

The old woman smiled again as she rolled chopped green onion, a fried breadstick and caraway into the pancake. As soon as she finished one, she handed it to them. Soon they were all engorging on hot pancakes.

Eating a 3-yuan double-egg pancake made them feel warm. In such a wild place with such biting wind, even a small pancake could be a source of warmth.

They finished their pancakes and took the bus back to campus.

In the following days, everyone in Qin Guan’s dormitory was quite busy. They had to take both the college exams and the driving school exam, plus bear the hatred of the roommate who had been rejected from driving school.

Cong Nianwei was quiet. They just called each other. Being a straight-A student, she was busier than Qin Guan because she was taking numerous courses. Qin Guan’s application for appointment had been postponed. He could do nothing about it except shed sad silent tears in a corner.

After getting his driver's license, Qin Guan received the advertising booklet by the shirt factory.

It was a thin booklet. On the cover, there was a photo of many shirts piled together. The brand and telephone number for ordering were printed on the edge. Inside there were the prices and sizes of each shirt.

Qin Guan found his own pictures in the featured products section of that season. There were traditional models wearing conservative clothes on the first two pages, followed by the new clothing line.

The printing quality was quite good. The colors were bright and beautiful. The series of photos in which Qin Guan was jumping took up a whole page.

The happy tall boy in the advertisement jumped in the sky with vigour. The size of the photos showed every little detail clearly for the customers to see.

Qin Guan thought the result was great. Tapping on the page, he turned to the next one. His bust photo was placed at the lower right corner, which matched well with the larger picture of the same shirt.

In fact, Qin Guan was gloomy those days. Xue Wanyi had made several calls to him, informing him of some advertisement shootings, but Qin Guan had exams to take. He refused all the

redundant part-time jobs to focus on getting the scholarship. He didn't have any time for independent jobs.

Huang Jiajia seemed understanding. She never kept him after the end of their lessons. Instead, she asked Qin Guan to work hard. How can a prince like me show off without a scholarship? I can't bear to lose face.

In the beginning of 1999, everyone seemed to be in a solemn mood as they took their pens and paper and entered the examination room.

During college exams, some supervisors were relaxed, especially during open book exams. Some supervisors, however, were strict. The roll call during regular courses served for presentations and homework and anything else that was calculated into a student's score.

Amid the general caterwauling, Qin Guan and his roommates finished their exams calmly. As if they hadn't irritated everybody else enough already, they guessed which scholarship they were going to get aloud in class, arousing everyone's hatred.

When they returned to their dormitory, they decided to have a dinner together before the holidays.

Qin Guan remembered that Sister Xue had called him several days ago, mentioning a bonus or something like that.

He dialed her number and heard her voice on the other end of line. “Where have you been, Qin Guan? Nice of you to remember to call me back. Why was your phone always switched off?”

Qin Guan moved the receiver a little farther from his ear. The woman on the other side of the line was shouting.

Qin Guan answered with a guilty smile, “I had exams, Sister Xue. It was a really bad time for us undergraduates. As soon as I was done with my exams, I called you.”

Sister Xue sounded a little comforted by his words, “The Chinese New Year is drawing near. What are your plans for the winter holidays?”

Without hesitation, Qin Guan answered, “I’ll go home. I can’t take any part-time jobs.”

Sister Xue answered, “Just as I expected. There will be no more jobs until the Spring Festival. Would you like to do an advertisement for the shirt company again? They will shoot another one after the Spring Festival. Are you interested?”

“It depends,” Qin Guan said, “As long as it doesn’t clash with my courses.”

Sister Xue smiled, “Fine, I’ll say yes for you. They are looking for a long-time collaboration with a model. They want you to appear in all their advertisements. It’s four times a year. I raised the price

for you. It's 3000 yuan each time. We can sign a one-year contract."

Qin Guan's mouth widened at the price. He was enraptured as he said, "No problem, Sister Xue. Thank you for your help. That's settled."

Thinking of something, Sister Xue said, "Give me your account number. I'll send you a sum of money."

Hearing that made Qin Guan even happier. "For what?" he asked.

His strange tone Qin Guan made Sister Xue angry. She shouted into the phone, "You can be proud! Your advertisement before the New Year was quite popular. Sales were amazing! The factory felt bad about your payment and gave you an extra 500-yuan as a gift. Give me your account and I'll send you the money. This amount is not worth meeting for, my child!"

Then she hang up, leaving Qin Guan smiling in contentment.

Soon she got a short message from him. She held the phone tightly as she read it. You love money? It will be easier for me.

Sister Xue had been secretly counting on Qin Guan, although he knew nothing about it. He couldn't help but laugh. The whole semester he had asked nothing of his parents. He had paid for his driving licence and made his own money.

# Chapter 26: Niu Street And The Zhang Yiyuan Tea Shop

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Winter vacation was drawing near. My train tickets should be booked in advance, as well as Cong Nianwei's.

I also have to get some local specialities for my family. I've been away from home for more than half a year. I can't return with bare hands.

Plus, the dinner before winter vacation would also cost him money. After calculating, Qin Guan realized that the large amount of money he had earned would all be spent soon. He held his thin wallet between his fingers. I've got a long way to go yet.

Several days later, the exam results were announced. As expected, all his roommates had passed the college exams as well as the [College English Test Band 4](#) with an 100% grade.

College English Test Band 4 is a national English test organized by the Ministry of Education. The participants are mainly undergraduate and postgraduate students who are still in college. It is quite an important test for all Chinese college students.

The moment they heard, they went around other dormitories one by one, showing off like little cockerels.

They got beaten so hard that they returned to their own dormitory with bloody noses and swollen faces.

The college scholarships were announced just before winter vacation. Four of them got a full scholarship while the other two got a partial scholarship.

Those two were quite depressed. One of them had been busy working for the student union while the other had worked on a dancing party. Everybody else had been busy with ordinary activities. How could those two have gotten a full scholarship?

Qin Guan was also depressed. Both his and Wang Lei's scores qualified for the national scholarship. Only one of them would get it while the other would get the partial national scholarship.

Soon the national scholarship list was announced, confirming Qin Guan's worries. Both Wang Lei and Liu Xiaoyang, his two nemeses, got the full national scholarship for each department.

Qin Guan read through the whole list pathetically.

Not bad. He'd gotten a partial scholarship. There was a 3000-yuan difference between the two scholarships.

It was a wide gap between the 8000-yuan full scholarship and the 5000-yuan partial scholarship.

Qin Guan was working on the steward software on computer. The 5000-yuan partial national scholarship plus the 1800-yuan college scholarship equalled 6800 yuan.



It's a large amount. I could indulge and buy something with the money I earned. They were all excited and decided to enjoy a big dinner out. Where would they go? To The Leopard, of course.

The Leopard's Buffet was quite expensive for undergraduates in early 1999. Its 168-yuan per person price scared most people away.

The six foodies took the bus to the Wangfujing Leopard, which was located at 55 Dong'anmen Street, Dongcheng District.

A seafood buffet was a novelty for people in the capital at the time.

Entering the restaurant, they were surrounded by the smell of dazzling dishes.

There was Japanese sashimi, seafood, Hong Kong roast pork, Guangdong Province cured meat, Chinese hot dishes, French desserts and Häagen-Dazs ice cream.

Getting their money's worth was a piece of cake.

They had such a good dinner that the luxurious dining room looked empty and simple to them.

They had seafood the same way they'd eat chicken wings at [Origus](#).

Origus is a famous brand of cafeteria in China with common food

at reasonable prices.

The amount of food each of them consumed was beyond the average person's imagination.

Of course, they didn't forget to shake their bodies as they supported themselves on the wall, making sure there was no spare space in their stomachs before they called it a night.

They had enjoyed an excellent dinner, but there was hell to pay the next morning. They had to wait in line outside the toilet the whole day. They all had diarrhoea.

It was so stupid. Who the hell would have combined raw and cold seafood, vegetables, fruit, greasy barbecue, and countless other kinds of staple food and desserts?

They had even had a bucket of ice cream. How could they not get diarrhoea?

After some deep introspection following the dinner, they reached the conclusion that they had built a good foundation for the belly-worshipping trend of the future.

Let's end that story here though, because Qin Guan had another date.

He went on a date with Cong Nianwei.

Her exams had finished early, so they'd arranged to return home together for winter vacation.

They both had to buy some gifts for home, so Qin Guan arranged a shopping date. He decided to impress Cong Nianwei with his profound shopping expertise.

That was the only thing he could do since he had been beaten in the exams and hadn't qualified for a full national scholarship.

Qin Guan had already bought the return train tickets and was going to bring her her student identity card and ticket.

He'd gotten Cong Nianwei's student identity card under the pretense of booking the tickets, and had placed it carefully under his pillow. He slept on it in the hopes of seeing his dream girl in his dreams every night.

His abnormal action had attracted the attention of his roommates, who had discovered his secret and had all looked at the card.

Seeing Cong Nianwei's photo, they sighed and patted Qin Guan on the shoulder with sympathy. Dude, it makes sense for you to have her. You have such a handsome face, and she's not just a straight-A student, but a beauty to boot.

You have a long way to go, Qin Guan.

Qin Guan paid no attention his roommates. They were just jealous.

The train was leaving the day next, so they had to go shopping that day. The task was hard and they had to finish it quickly.

They met at the Modern Plaza and decided that Niu Street would be their first stop.

Niu Street was the largest Muslim gathering place in the capital. The famous Niu Street mosque, which dated back to the Song Dynasty, was located there and was also the origin of the street's name.

When they got off the bus, Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei were shocked by the sight. Muslim buildings of different sizes, featuring the foreign architectural style, could be seen everywhere. With their steeple tops, green foundation and yellow walls, those buildings were quite different from buildings in other streets.

You could distinguish clearly the native people from the business men of Niu Street. Niu Street men wore white skullcaps on their heads, while the women wore saris to cover their hair.

The shops on Niu Street were unique. There were century old renowned shops, but the majority of the shops on the street were selling take-away desserts and special snacks.

Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei were not in a hurry. They strolled along the street and observed the shops one by one. If they saw something interesting, they would just buy it.

New Year Bai Cake couldn't be reserved for long. Customers had to eat it as soon as possible after buying it.

It would take them more than ten hours to return home by train. The cake would surely go bad by then. Qin Guan asked for two small pieces. The salespersons scooped up two pieces of cake, wrapped them in oil paper and passed them over to them.

They lifted up one corner of the paper and took a bite. It was soft millet cake, with sweet and soft bean paste in the middle and haw stripes on top. New Year Bai Cake was soft, sour and sweet at the same time.

They put the sticky cake into their mouths and swallowed cosily. It was like a feast.

They noticed a long queue emerge from a small alley by the street, and Qin Guan craned his neck to have a look. Someone was selling cooked Nian meat. He couldn't help but shake his head.

I could have bought some as a gift if this was after 2000. There was no vacuum packing yet in early 1999 though. The meat would go bad easily.

Donglaishun hot pot, Laobaodu sheep or pork, Douzhi Bao

ground bean drink, Snack of Hong. All these didn't match Qin Guan's idea of a gift. Qin Guan pulled Cong Nianwei and they walked down the street before finally reaching their destination, the Dashunzhai Super Market.

The Dashunzhai Super Market was a renowned Niu Street Muslim Market. With a history of more than 300 years, the market engaged in the sale of Muslim pastries and cakes, including its most famous product, the sweetened baked wheaten cake.

“I’ve heard from my roommates that when Muslims went on a pilgrimage journey to Jerusalem in the early times, they would take with them wheaten cakes from the Dashunzhai in Tong Town.”

They just bought a cake each and ate them on the spot. They had to get other things from the supermarket.

They wanted to buy Niu Street fried mixed powder, Muslim preserved fruit and eight kinds of Beijing pastries. They were all in simple packages with expiration dates and capital features.

They bought a few of each kind and shared them. When they went out of the supermarket, Qin Guan was holding two large bags of local specialities.

It was middle of the day, and they couldn't miss the Niu Street Hong Snack Restaurant. They served all kinds of Muslim snacks there, both sweet and sour.

After getting seated and putting down their bags, Qin Guan automatically switched to ordering mode. He ordered a long list of things, including vegetarian balls, chopped entrails soup, steamed dumplings with minced beef and gravy, fermented Mung Bean Juice and much more. After ordering all those dishes, Qin Guan realized that Cong Nianwei was sitting right across from him.

He added at once, “How do you like this, Cong Nianwei? Do you want anything else?” Dude, it’s a little late for that now.

Cong Nianwei found everything on Qin Guan interesting. Why was the guy like that when it came to food? She waved Qin Guan’s question off, “I don't mind. You pick.”

Qin Guan was quite pleased. What did I do with to deserve such an easy-going girl?

They decided on the order and Qin Guan went to the counter to give their long list of dishes. There were two natives there, who seemed quite garrulous at the first sight. They made fun of Qin Guan, “Hey dude, did you get confused there? You made such a big order.”

Qin Guan smiled shyly. It was indeed a little much.

He held a long machine-printed receipt in hand and, pointing to Cong Nianwei, he answered, “My partner in confusion is over there. I should feed her first, shouldn’t I?”

They all burst into laughter. He took all the dishes one by one from different windows and returned to his seat, sweat dripping down his face. It was physical work to run along the line of different windows so many times.

The cooked stripes were crisp and the chopped entrails were delicious.

They ate everything, leaving only a mess of empty plates on the table. They both had a full stomach.

Qin Guan picked up the shopping bags for Cong Nianwei and gestured for her to go ahead. The two of them headed to their next destination.

Zhang Yiyuan was a tea shop with a history of about a century. Its most famous kind of tea was jasmine tea, which was what Qin Guan wanted.

Zhang Yiyuan's flagship store was located at Dashila in Qianmen. They bought quite a lot of tea and twenty mini cans for tea reserved by the shop assistant. Qin Guan shared half of the cans with Cong Nianwei.

Cong Nianwei held one of them while she observed it. It was very pretty. A traditional scene of the old capital was printed on the can in elegant ink wash style. It was the perfect Spring Festival gift.

At the time, 100-yuan jasmine tea was quite good quality. It was a



fragrant tea that could endure brewing while its green leaves created a beautiful contrast against its tiny white flowers. It was a first-rate gift at a reasonable price.

Walking out of the tea shop, they each bought two pairs of handmade cloth shoes for their parents from Neiliansheng, a famous traditional shoe shop in Beijing.

As two tycoons on scholarships, they were sure to spend money on luxury goods.

They went around the old famous shops in Dashila, including Qianxiangyi, Ruifuxiang and Tongrentang. Soon, Qin Guan had two more bags in his hands.

By that time, he was tired and breathing hard while Cong Nianwei still looked quite energetic.

It was late, and they were nearly done with their shopping. Qin Guan made a careful suggestion to Cong Nianwei, "We've been walking around the whole day. Shall I take you back to campus? We have to pack before we go home." Cong Nianwei turned her head and glanced at him in a flirting manner. Qin Guan's knees turned to jelly at her expression. Tired as he was, he couldn't help but look back at Cong Nianwei helplessly.

Cong Nianwei smiled at his silly expression, ran several steps towards Qin Guan and took hold of the bags in his hands.

Qin Guan felt her fingers sweep over his palm. Her touch felt like an electric shock over his whole body, making him limp and numb.

## Chapter 27: A Kind Of Successful Confession

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Qin Guan mastered up the courage to hold Cong Nianwei's hand. Squinting at her soft, sweet-smelling little hand, he said tensely, "Cong Nianwei, I love you."

Cong Nianwei looked down their intertwined hands and answered calmly, "Yes, I know."

Qin Guan continued in a nervous, shaking voice, "So, will you be my girlfriend?"

Cong Nianwei smiled gently. A wicked small voice inside her heart said, "How could I become his girlfriend when we've never even had a fight? Things can't be this smooth."

She opened her mouth and asked, "Why?" At her answer, Qin Guan looked up at her blankly. "Why?" he repeated dumbly. "We were childhood sweethearts and friends."

"We were just classmates in senior high. We didn't even exchange a word during the first two and a half years," Cong Nianwei answered calmly.

"But we were well-acquainted with each other and had mutual friends." Qin Guan's eyebrows fell.

"I've known you for half a year, and all I know about you is that you're a silly foodie. You don't know all that much about me

either,” Cong Nianwei said neutrally.

“I... I am handsome, and studious... and I make a lot of money,” Qin Guan said incoherently.

Cong Nianwei couldn't help but laugh contentedly, “I'm also attractive, and more studious than you. And when it comes to money, who can make predict what the future holds?”

Qin Guan wanted to die. What the hell am I even saying? This is so embarrassing! Before he could get disheartened, he heard words of hope come out of Cong Nianwei's mouth.

“I think we need to get to know each other more. We could get along eventually.” Cong Nianwei gripped his hand, which had been holding hers for a while.

Qin Guan pinched himself dumbly before he asked carefully, “Get along eventually?”

Cong Nianwei nodded, “That's what I said. We could get along gradually.”

Hearing this, Qing Guan threw the plastic bags down to the ground and let her hand go. He ran a few steps forward with his long legs and then turned around.

He squatted in front of her and gestured to his back while he said, “Are you tired? Get on my back.”

Cong Nianwei was amused by his silly actions and covered her mouth with her hand as she laughed. She patted Qin Guan, "Okay. No more window-shopping. Let's take everything and go back."

Qin Guan saluted in the manner of the Qing Dynasty, "Yes, Miss Cong. At your service." Then he picked up the bags and guided Cong Nianwei to a taxi happily. On the way back, Qin Guan's mouth was wide open. He took Cong Nianwei back to campus with a silly smile on his face, holding her hands reluctantly as they reached her dormitory building.

Seeing that there were people around, Cong Nianwei stepped hard on Qin Guan's foot, making him drop his wandering hands. "I'll pick you up the day we return home," Qin Guan said. Her mouth twitched at his words. She took her bags and ran upstairs.

Qin Guan did not feel tired anymore. He saw Cong Nianwei off and then swung the plastic bags in his hands and started humming a terrible song, "Our ordinary people today are happy and okay." He bounced on the Tsinghua University campus until at last he left.

Chi Hailin happened to be riding by at the time. Qin Guan was really hard to miss.

Chi Hailin saw him from a distance, bouncing around like an idiot. He felt sick at the sight.

One sentence kept repeating into his mind, "Cong Nianwei

prefers this idiot to me. Cong Nianwei prefers this idiot to me.”

He rode beside Qin Guan in hatred. He was angry with Qin Guan's actions, which were getting more and more silly by the minute. He couldn't bear to turn his head and watch him act like an idiot.

He was too focused on Qin Guan and forgot to watch where he was going when he reached a T-junction. He could only go left or right, straight ahead was a dead end.

One second Chi Hailin was watching Qin Guan's silly actions, and the next he was crashing into the boscaje.

His bike clanked. One of the wheels flew high into the sky and landed on top of a bush while the other was caught into the earth below.

His books and papers scattered all around. Chi Hailing himself was wedged between two trees. He had several bloody scratches on his face, and he seemed to be in a difficult position.

Realizing what had just happened, he suddenly lost his heart. I laughed at him for being an idiot. What am I then? A super idiot?

Qin Guan had no idea what had just happened because of him. He just took a taxi back to his dormitory and began to pack his luggage. He was quite pleased with himself.

Their room was a mess. They had all got return tickets from the college office and were packing their luggage. All except just one, who was just sitting aside looking downhearted.

Liu Xiaoyang looked hurt. All his roommates would go back home for the Spring Festival. Of course, he also would return home, but he somehow always felt abandoned and alone there.

Liu Xiaoyang was the kind of person who had never had any childhood friends. Nobody wanted to play with a boy like him. Child wonders always made others feel inferior in comparison.

What's more, Liu Xiaoyang's arrogance and spoiled attitude scared others away. He had been arrogant since a very young age.

In some sense, his five roommates were his first real friends.

Qin Guan packed the last tea can into his suitcase, clapped his hands, and stood up. Then he walked to Liu Xiaoyan, messed his hair with his hands and said, "This time things will be different. The boys in your neighborhood will be different."

Confused, Liu Xiaoyang fixed his hair again and asked, "How is that possible? I know these boys very well."

Qin Guan explained nothing. Actions speak louder than words. Liu Xiaoyang would feel the changes once he returned home.

Everyone put away their luggage and messed up Liu's hair. The

next day, they would return home separately to visit their families.



## Chapter 28: The Long Train Ride Home

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Qin Guan picked up Cong Nianwei at noon the next day. They squeezed into the train with their luggage, huffing and puffing. It was Spring Festival peak travelling season, and the train was extremely crowded.

When they finally reached their seats, the train was already full to the brim. Qin Guan didn't give a damn though as he pushed their luggage wherever there was room and held onto their tickets.

Their seats were not bad. They were double seats by the window. Treating the student in charge of ticket-booking had paid off.

Qin Guan talked to the people sitting in their seats and they left. It was a common occurrence when there were too many people in a carriage for people to take any spare seat until the passenger whose seat this was turned up. Mutual understanding was appreciated when travelling. You might be wondering why Qin Guan hadn't booked sleeping tickets.

Colleges could only book seats for students. Tickets for beds were only available at the station.

Who dare say that he could have booked tickets for sleepers by waiting in line at the station? Come out and I promise not to beat you.

Qin Guan hung their coats and asked Cong Nianwei to hold their bags in her arms. He took out a thermos bottle from under the

table, but saw that it was empty.

He turned his eyes to the crowded carriage aisle and asked Cong Nianwei, “Are you thirsty?”

Cong Nianwei shook her head. She had never seen such a thing. Adults were crying and children were making noise. There were people everywhere in the carriage, including the aisle and the restroom.

She was still shocked when the train slowly pulled out of the station. Qin Guan said something to her, and then began to tread through the ocean of people with the thermos bottle, heading towards the water heater.

When he came back carrying a full bottle, his sweater was wrinkled and sweaty. He took it off right away.

If he had been on the street during the day, he would have surely attracted everyone’s attention. On the crowded train though, nobody paid him any mind. There were so many people who looked even stranger than him. Some had even taken off their shoes and socks, while others were scratching their feet with their fingers or snoring loudly.

Qin Guan folded up his sweater and pushed it into the corner of Cong Nianwei's seat. He told her to use it as a cushion if she felt tired.

By the time they passed the first station, the people in the carriage had finally found their own seats and quieted down.

Qin Guan took a vacuum cup out of the plastic bag that contained their food, put some tea powder in it and poured hot water from the thermos bottle. When he passed the cup to Cong Nianwei, the water in it had already turned into aromatic hot jasmine tea.

They were casting intimate amorous glances at each other, the passengers sitting across from them shouting to them in annoyance and destroying the atmosphere.

“Hey, young man, may I have some hot water?” the old man across from him shouted in a typical loud Shandong Province accent.

Qin Guan nodded and answered, “No problem. At your service.”

The old man gave him a large smile, filled half his jug with hot water and took a sip. “Are you college students? Are you dating?” he asked.

Cong Nianwei flushed suddenly as she met the old man’s eyes. Qin Guan had to restrain himself from laughing at her.

This strong-willed girl was flushing because of something a stranger had said. Watching Cong Nianwei's expression, Qin Guan’s eyes shined. He really wanted to kiss her.

Cong Nianwei turned her head to find a silly expression on Qin Guan's face. The guy had something naughty in his mind. She stretched two fingers and pinched his waist.

She had been practicing that movement since she was a kid. She poked the side of his waist, where a mass of useless fat tended to accumulate.

Cong Nianwei grabbed his skin and muscle and twisted, but Qin Guan didn't make the sad, shrill cry she had expected. She had failed to twist it right.

Qin Guan's recent physical training had been really effective. He now had V-line abs and tight, flat abdominal muscles. That's why Cong Nianwei had failed to pinch him.

Not aware that he had just been pinched, Qin Guan kept smiling like an idiot. The old man across from them took out a deck of cards and asked, "Do you want to play?"

The three of them turned their eyes to the only young man there.

The young man, who sitting across from Qin Guan, looked like a college student. He was reading a thick textbook, and he turned to them with a disdainful expression when he heard the old man's question.

Qin Guan took a glance at the book in his hands. He saw nothing but engineering terminology. Hey, that was my major in my past

life. This is a colleague.

When he didn't get a response from the people sitting beside him, the old man turned to the people standing in the aisle. They all had too much spare time. It was a twelve-hour train ride. Most people were longing for some entertainment, so they joined them.

The table was too small to fit many, so they only accepted one person in the game. The rest just surrounded the table and watched. The reading young man looked at them disdainfully and buried himself in his book again.

Early on in the game, Qin Guan realized they were playing against a superior opponent. His and Cong Nianwei's total IQ might be ten times their opponents', but they were no good at playing cards.

Their opponents reached K while Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei gloomily reached six. The young man across from them couldn't bear it any more. He put down his book and said, "Hey, why are you playing this card? You should play this one..." Cong Nianwei found his suggestion clear and logical. She turned to their opponents, "I'm not very good at this game. Shall we switch a player and start over?"

The old man and his partner nodded, "All right." The young man rolled up his sleeves and became Qin Guan's partner.

They started from 2 again. After one round, the old man had reached K. Qin Guan's hand was tragic. He only reached 4.

The young man smiled in embarrassment as he threw his cards on the table. “Actually, my hand was not bad.”

It definitely wasn't. You knew the cards of both parties. After two rounds, the old man realized how late it was. He took a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket and asked them, “Smoke?”

Qin Guan shook his head while the young man nodded happily. Why did his attitude change so much after that game?

The two of them finished smoking and filled the thermos bottle again. All four of them prepared to do the most important thing on the train-eat instant noodles, that is.

By that time, they all had gotten to know each other. Qin Guan, Cong Nianwei and the old man were from the same city while the young man came from the City of WF. He would get off the train at midnight.

Qin Guan asked about his profession and realized they had been schoolmates in his past life. He was only two years older than Qin Guan. It seemed like fate.

Qin Guan immediately felt a sense of intimacy. In less than two minutes, the two of them were talking like old friends.

Qin Guan suddenly realized that the young man was exactly like he had been before his rebirth-an indoors man who didn't get

along well with others. That was one of the advantages of being good looking.

The old man was even more pitiful. He had had affairs in the capital and had only gotten off at rush hour. He could do nothing, but take this crowded train home.

While they ate instant noodles, the old man gave each of them a boiled egg. Qin Guan took out the thick ham he had bought and cut a piece for everyone. This was a typical train meal-ham, eggs and instant noodles.

When they finished their noodles, they cleared the table, and closed their eyes to get some rest.

It was already deep into the night. Everything was silent except for the clanking train. Several snores were heard occasionally, making the night seem even quieter.

Cong Nianwei was tired and had fallen asleep. Her eyebrows were screwed up in a small lump, as if she was having a bad dream.

Qin Guan gently placed her head on his shoulder, trying his best to make her more comfortable.

Feeling his warmth, Cong Nianwei twisted, trying get into a more comfortable position on his shoulder before she fell asleep once again

Qin Guan was both suffering and enjoying this. Cong Nianwei's soft, warm face was leaning against his shoulder. His lips were near her. His mind was full of naughty thoughts that he wasn't brave enough to realize. Qin Guan felt conflicted.

Before the conflict inside him could be resolved, the train slowed down again. It had arrived at a small station in the deep, dark night.

By the time Qin Guan had come back to his senses, the train had already stopped. The train workers placed the board down and opened the door.



## Chapter 29: A Martial Artist Among Ordinary People

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Suddenly, a pained cry came out of a nearby carriage, “Help! Robber!”

The old man across from them woke up immediately upon hearing it. He seemed to be hyper-vigilant.

Cong Nianwei was still leaning on Qin Guan's shoulder in a daze, and the young man seated opposite her was snoring.

A young man ran fast from the nearby carriage holding a small black bag. He jumped and leapt fast through the open door into the carriage, where the passengers were all sleeping in a state of great disorder.

A middle-aged woman was running after him. Her hair was messy and she looked upset. The expression in her eyes was one of fear and helplessness. She was pursuing the young man like crazy, but the distance between them was getting bigger.

The young robber was two steps away from reaching the open door. In such a small station, this late at night, he would be able to get away as long as he rushed out of the exit of the platform.

The middle-aged woman seemed to realize this. The expression in her eyes was getting more and more disappointed. She slowed down unconsciously.

The young man seemed proud of himself. Suddenly, someone grabbed him by the back of his neck and dragged him back. He struggled to get free, but he was not in control of his body, and he ended up falling head first to the floor.

Qin Guan was already wide awake. He gently woke Cong Nianwei up, pushing her off his shoulder. He explained to her what was going on and stood up to help.

The robber had been pulled back by someone who kept tugging at him sharply. It was the old man opposite Qin Guan who had stopped him.

He was standing right in the face of the robber with his arms crossed. He looked like he was watching a poor slug.

The young robber, who had found himself suffering defeat just on the verge of victory, stood up. He looked both angry and ashamed.

The majority of the passengers in the carriage had woken up. Watching the scene, they hastened to remind the owner, who looked stupefied, "Call the railway police at once!"

"That's it! Don't let him go!"

The middle-aged woman mumbled something as she nodded to the crowd appreciatively and squeezed to the other side of the

carriage to call the railway police.

People created a small circle around the young man to prevent him from escaping before the policemen arrived. By then, all the young man cared about was giving the old man a lesson.

Wrapping the stolen bag around his waist, he charged at him. The old man remained calm. Before the robber could rush at him, he stretched out a hand and hit the young man's left cheek. The young man fell to the floor.

He looked badly beaten. His eyes were red and he shouted loudly as he got up again. He seemed to have a death wish. There was another clapping sound as the old man slapped his right cheek this time.

The young man covered both cheeks with his hands and breathed heavily, flushing with humiliation.

He climbed up from the floor with a roll, and then took a flick knife out of his pocket and flipped it open.

The sharp blade reflected a cold light under the light of the carriage. People in the carriage held their breath and took a small step back.

The robber was about to risk his life by using that lethal weapon. Several kind-hearted people stood aside and warned the old man, "He has a knife. Be careful."

“Right. Don't fight with him, no matter what. Wait for the policemen.”

Leaving little time for the old man to react, the young man stabbed him directly with the knife.

The old man, on the other side, seemed to be in no hurry. He took a starting pose, blocked the knife with his left hand and clapped his right hand over it.

He didn't spare his strength this time. The young man flew over and landed on the floor with a loud sound. The knife in his hand was thrown away. A kind passenger kicked it away with his foot.

The young man stood up again, shaking. He looked confused and stupefied as he stared at the old man before him, who was still in a fighting stance.

Several rounds of fighting went by in a flash. Qin Guan stared at them, offering no help. Cong Nianwei kept her eyes wide open while she remained in her seat.

The most shocked person in the carriage had to be the young man sitting beside the old man. His jaw had opened wide right from the start, so much so that it looked like it had been dislocated. A drop of unknown liquid, which looked suspiciously like saliva, dripped from the corner of his mouth down to the table.

The old man finished his moves just as the railway policemen arrived to take away the battered young man. The old man also had to give a statement about the whole incident.

When they all left, the carriage was left boiling. The passengers talked heatedly about what just had happened. This had to be a real martial artist. He'd beaten a strong young man in just three rounds!

The young man sitting beside the old man was particularly excited. He kept murmuring to himself like he had a mental disorder, "A martial arts master indeed. He definitely was a master. Did you see his stance? His legs were steady as a rock."

Not long after, the old man returned. The railway police understood what had transpired and had let him go for the time being. The train had already started to pull off the small station.

With an obsessed, worshipping expression his eyes, the young man observed the old man again. Looking at the firm willpower in his gaze, he thought the man must have a profound inner power. That and his low-profile attitude made him sure he was a martial arts master.

Qin Guan was also curious about the old man. He opened a can of beer, filled a jug and handed it over to him. Have some beer to relieve the shock.

The old man was not one for decorum. He took the jug and finished half of it in one go. The young man beside him accepted

the jug to please him. He put it on the table and told him cautiously, “Eldest brother, you are indeed a martial arts master!”

The old man laughed casually, “That was nothing. I’m a long way from being a master.”

The young man swallowed his spittle. How was that far from being a master? He went on, “How do you call your movements? Could you please teach me?”

The old man sized the young man up from head to toe and shook his head, “They are quite simple Plum Blossom and Mantis Fists movements, but you don’t seem to be into physical exercise. Your body is not made for martial arts. It would be a snow job for you.”

Then pointing at Qin Guan, he said, “This young brother does not look too bad, though. But it’d be no use for him to start at this age. He could only learn how to avoid getting hurt during a fight.”

The old man shook his head again, “My martial arts can only work against average people. I’m far from being a real master.”

The young man looked extremely dejected. He’d thought he’d come across a lonely martial arts master. A master with an aging strong body, who would recognize his excellent quality and transfer his own century-old power over to him.

The reality was that every time somebody else was fighting, the young man hid in the sidelines in fear and watched. The master

had laughed at his weakness and hadn't passed his power on to him.

Before he could regain his vigour, a package of roast chicken was presented to him. The young man recovered in an instant.

The chicken was brought by the woman who had been robbed. She wanted to show her gratitude for the old man's help. She had made the chicken herself.

Inside the black bag had been her annual income for selling roast chicken.

The old man accepted her gratitude and took the chicken. He generously invited the three of them to join him in eating it.

Looking at her watch, Cong Nianwei decided not to sleep anymore after all that ruckus. There was delicious food to be had, so she'd much rather have a night snack.

As they unwrapped the oil-paper package, a delicious fragrance came out. There was a whole roast chicken inside, lying on its stomach. It was golden yellow and red. The old man held its legs and wings, and pulled. Its flesh separated easily from the bones.

They shared the chicken and filled their mouths with its meat. The skin was elastic and its flesh was fat and tender. The mixed scent of spices, herbs and meat filled their teeth and cheeks.

Drinking his beer, the old man sighed, “A cup of liquor is all I need.” He smiled at the others shyly.

The young man could not spare a minute to talk to him anymore. He had already forgotten about his idol, the martial artist sitting by his side. The only thing on his mind was finishing his chicken leg before he got off at the next station.

When the train stopped again, the young man reluctantly waved farewell to the others. As he departed, he turned his head around to get a final look at the chicken in the oil paper package.

Qin Guan and the old man shared the leftover bones. Then they took a nap before the train reached the terminal station and the end of its journey.



# Chapter 30: Business In The Morning Market

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Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei could see their parents waiting on the platform. Qin Guan carried their luggage on his shoulders. As soon as the door opened, he went out.

Qin Guan's father moved forward to take the luggage as Cong Nianwei's parents hurried over.

Before Qin Guan could say a word to his father, both families began to exchange pleasantries. "How are you? I'm Qin Guan's father."

"How are you? I'm Cong Nianwei's father." Then they looked at each other silently. This was their first meeting. They didn't know each other at all, so they had nothing to say to keep the conversation going.

Cong Nianwei pulled at Qin Guan's coat. He hastened to introduce her parents to his father. "How do you do, sir? Ma'am? Cong Nianwei and I were classmates in senior high school. This is my father."

Tactfully, Cong Nianwei stood behind her parents. Qin Guan's father handled the situation while he thought, "Well done, dude! You come home with a girl?"

He looked quite pleased with himself.

At Qin Guan's words, Cong Nianwei's parents immediately became nervous. They regarded him carefully.

Qing Guan hurried to add, "I'm also studying in the capital. Our colleges are not far from each other. It's not safe for a girl to travel alone by train, so I kept Cong Nianwei company."

Her parents looked relieved at his explanation. That's not too bad. The young man hadn't jumped into calling them his parents-in-law. Their heart rates slowed down gradually.

After Qin Guan had set their minds at rest, they found that he was very handsome and tall. Cong Nianwei's mother looked quite satisfied with him as she asked, "So, you also study in the capital like our Weiwei? Which university are you attending?"

Qin Guan replied with particular politeness, "The Capital University of Finance and Economics." At his words, his father stood up straight.

Realizing that Qin Guan was also studying at a famous university, Cong Nianwei's mother's impression of him got even better. He's a hard-working college student, too.

Cong Nianwei felt like this was some kind of blind date. She pulled on the corner of her mother's clothes. They said goodbye to each other, and each of them dragged their child's luggage and left the platform.

When they got home, Qin Guan and his father found Qin Guan's mother waiting by the door to welcome them. Breakfast was already on the table. Qin Guan washed his hands quickly and sat down.

There were salted duck eggs, smoked sausages, steamed buns and rice porridge on the table. A complete homemade meal was right in front of Qin Guan.

He was starving. He finished two bowls of porridge in a hurry, washed his face and got in bed. Not long after, he fell asleep. No one could have stayed up any longer after sitting in a train the whole night.

The landline phone rang and woke him up. Qin Guan checked his watch and realized that it was afternoon. His parents had to be at work.

He massaged his head and answered the phone, "Hello? Who is it?"

A particularly excited voice came through the receiver, "Are you back, Qin Guan? This is Zhou Jing." Qin Guan looked at the receiver before he hung the phone up with a slam. He dropped down on the bed and tried to go back to sleep.

The phone just wouldn't let him. It rang ceaselessly. Qing Guan was beyond annoyed. He picked the receiver again and shouted, "You brat! Stop harassing me! I'll call you after I've gotten enough

sleep. Don't you have any common sense?"

A cold voice came through the receiver, "Qin Guan? This is Cong Nianwei."

"What? Dear me! Cong Nianwei, I thought you were Zhou Jing. I didn't mean to shout at you. How are you doing? Did you have a good rest?" Qin Guan's attitude changed instantly.

Cong Nianwei burst into laughter and said, "I'll go to my grandma's for the Spring Festival. I'm telling you in advance that I won't be able to accompany you, in case you were planning to ask me."

Qin Guan felt disappointed. Lying on the pillow, he answered slowly, "Okay. I'll call you. Have a good time."

As he hung up the phone, Qin Guan felt listless. The holidays had finally arrived. He had planned to take advantage of the vacation to make their relationship more intimate. He hadn't expected that they'd end up spending the holidays separately in different locations.

Suddenly, the phone rang again. Qin Guan answered gloomily, "Hello?" It was Zhou Jing again. "Hey, it's me. What about our vacation?"

Qin Guan was confused. "It's your vacation. How would I know about it?"

Zhou Jing sounded nervous as he said, “Will you help us or not?”

“Help you do what?”

“Make money!”

He had tasted the sweetness of money and was now totally dependent on Qin Guan. Qin Guan sat up straight and answered, “Wait a moment. Let me get this clear. You and Li Jian want to make money, is that right?”

“Definitely.”

“Why are you depending on me, then? Find a solution yourself.” Qin Guan was helpless. Zhou Jing, on the other hand, was quite frank and shameless. “You major in Economics, Li Jian and I study Law and Computers. We’re no good at making money!”

Qin Guan gritted his teeth. Okay. You want to make money, eh? Wait and see. I’ll exhaust you two! He gritted his teeth as he told Zhou Jing, “Come to my house tomorrow with your capital.”

On the other end of the line, Zhou Jing and Li Jian looked at each other. We did it! They answered immediately, “Okay, we’ll be there.”

Early on the next morning, the two shameless guys bummed

breakfast off at Qin Guan's house. Noticing the expression on Qin Guan's face, they took out of their pockets 200 yuan in cash.

They showed Qin Guan the two notes casually, setting them on the tea table beside the sofa. Pointing to them, Qin Guan looked up and told them, “Are you kidding me? This is your capital?”

The two of them looked ashamed as they replied, “We haven’t been able to save much money lately. That's all we have.”

Originally, Qin Guan had planned to take advantage of them, but now he just pocketed the money and said, “That's fine. We’ll go prepare our stock. We’re starting early tomorrow morning. Let’s go.”

Zhou Jing and Li Jian followed Qin Guan obediently. They rode Qin Guan's little tricycle to the largest wholesale market in the City of Y. Qin Guan focused on nothing but the stands selling scrolls and pictures, as well as pictures of Chinese Zodiac signs in the Spring Festival merchandise section. He spent nearly all their capital on common goods at wholesale prices.

When Qin Guan carried all the goods to the tricycle, Zhou Jing seemed confused. “Aren’t we selling kebab?” he asked.

Qin Guan regretted that his friend’s offspring hadn’t lived up to his expectations. He stared at Zhou Jing. “Who will come out for outdoor kebab and cold beer in the freezing night before the Spring Festival?”

They both looked resentful as they promised to follow Qin Guan's instructions. Qin Guan sighed and said, "We'll meet at six o'clock at the morning market on Haibin Road. Let's call it a day now. Go back to where you came from."

Hearing that concrete plan, they both went home happily. Qin Guan sighed again. A person shouldn't look back at his bad friends, or some silly friend will get them killed by accident. I'll get exhausted when I should be having a fun vacation.

Early on the next morning, the three of them met up at the Haibin Morning Market. It was one of the largest morning markets in Y City, located by the harbor. The pedlars began their business before dawn. There were all kinds of goods sold there, including fresh fish and shrimp, fruit, vegetables, various household supplies, scarves, underwear and so on.

After walking through the whole market, they discovered that there was a certain discipline and organization to it. The stands were fixed, and special market management was applied.

The three of them were stunned. Shamelessly, Qin Guan played his best card. He used his looks to flatter the old women who were selling underwear and cheap bedsheets.

The two women noticed a handsome young man who looked like he was freezing. His ears were red on such a cold morning. He must have a hard time doing business at that age. Poor thing!

The two women immediately showed their maternal instincts by

making room between their stands for Qin Guan to display his Spring Festival scroll.

The three boys lay down their scrolls and yelled down the street, “Ladies and gentlemen, Spring Festival season is approaching! Buy a pair of scrolls for good luck!”

Believe me, their business was quite good. The scrolls they had bought by bulk were sold out with profit. Generally speaking, a cheap pair could earn them 0.5 yuan while the more expensive Spring Festival and colourful bunny pictures could exceed the prime cost by 1 yuan.



# Chapter 31: The Urban Management Officer

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Soon, half their stock had been sold. When they were free, Li Jian touched the fat on his stomach, turned suddenly toward Qin Guan and asked, “Just now I was thinking about something. The three of us, ” he pointed at Zhou Jian and Qin Guan, “can be considered top students, right?”

Zhou Jing nodded in agreement. Li Jian went on, “Then why are we doing jobs that are for junior high students?”

Qin Guan looked at Li Jian speechlessly, “As a poor man with only 200 yuan to invest and an undergraduate without a diploma, what job can you do except sell something on the market? Do you hope that some big boss suffering from a mental disorder will come begging you to save his business with tears in his eyes? Or are you perhaps waiting for an investment predator to present you with a share of stocks as a gift for your outstanding scores?”

The flesh on Li Jian’s cheek was shaking while the old woman selling underwear pulled Qin Guan with effort and said, “Hey, stop talking. There comes the urban management officer. ”

With a particularly scared expression on their faces, the three of them looked at the other end of the long street. A young man, not much older than them, was checking the stands idly. He was wearing an urban management officer uniform, which looked appalling.

They stopped chatting and swept up the unsold scrolls and

pictures, piling them in the tricycle as they prepared to run away.

However, the noise had attracted the officer's attention.

Zhao Fengzhu was feeling quite gloomy that day. He was a formidable graduate with a criminal investigation specialty in the Detective Training School who hadn't been assigned to the police force. Instead, he had unfairly been stuck into the urban management squad, because his father had been too worried about his safety.

As an aspiring young man, he was too impatient to socialize with the old women who run the stands there.

Zhao Fengzhu was feeling quite depressed when he discovered the three thieves. "Stop! You dare run an illegal stand in a formal market? You were acting in utter disregard of the law!"

It was Zhao Fengzhu's first day at work, so he decided to catch the three scoundrels himself.

They saw the officer rolling his sleeves up and rushing over. Qin Guan shouted loudly, "Run! Quick! Run!"

They ran quickly towards the exit of the market. Qin Guan was riding on the tricycle, pedaling non-stop like a deer.

Zhou Jing ran and hid among the stands like a clever monkey up a tree.

Li Jian felt like he'd never run this fast before. Wind blew under his feet while the thrilling northern wind roared in his ears.

The flesh on his face had flattened to both sides and shook slightly while he ran.

He was satisfied with his burst of energy, and felt like time had stood still as he sprinted. Oh, fine. He had been caught.

Qin Guan had already gotten far away when he heard Li Jian cry from somewhere behind him, "Help! Qin Guan! Zhou Jin! Help me! I've been caught!"

Qin Guan stopped pedaling, let out a sigh and turned around.

He found the proud young officer twisting Li Jian and Zhou Jing jumping up and down beside them without knowing how to help.

Qin Guan could do nothing but take advantage of the push power momentum of the tricycle to leap high from his seat. He kicked the young officer down to the ground, pulled Li Jian onto the seat of the tricycle and shouted loudly, "Pedal like your life depends on it!"

Without any word, Li Jian burst into infinite power in an instant. His short legs pedaled up and down as they rode far away.

Qin Guan made a gesture to Zhou Jian, “You go first. I’ll meet you at your place.” With an anxious glance at Qin Guan, Zhou Jing followed Li Jian swiftly.

Zhao Fengzhu whisked the dirt off his clothes and said, “Well done. You must be really loyal to your friends.”

Qin Guan was straightforward, “Cut the crap. Let’s have a one-on-one contest. If you catch me, I’ll follow you wherever you want. I’ll be at your disposition.”

Hearing Qin Guan’s words, Zhao Fengzhu felt admiration for him. Besides, he had graduated from a detective training school. His fighting skills were surely better than Qin Guan’s, who looked like a college student.

Thus, Zhao Fengzhu told Qin Gun generously, “Fine, one-on-one, then.”

Pointing at the square off Binjiang Road, Qin Guan said, “There’s an open space over there. Let’s not fight here, or we’ll destroy the stands.”

Zhao Fengzhu fixed his hat. “Okay,” he said and walked directly to the square.

When he turned his head away, Qin Guan grinned. He sneaked around to a small nearby alley and ran away.

Zhao Fengzhu was still thinking about which tricks he could use to beat Qin Guan when he stood on the square and turned around. He found nothing behind him except garbage flying around in the chilly winter wind.

That's when he realized he had been tricked by Qin Guan. Grinding his teeth, he thought, "You wait and see, boy."

The three of them escaped successfully and met up at Zhou Jin's house. They calculated their income that day and went to buy supplies again.

Why they didn't give up when they'd just been chased by an urban management officer? They had made money! They had sold hundreds of pictures and scrolls in only one morning! The cost-income ratio had been so high, it had exceeded their expectations.

They muttered and reached the conclusion that, according to the checking rules, the officers were not expected to go around the morning market very early in the morning. They decided to rush into danger and ran a stand again the next morning.

The following two days went basically like this.

"Hey, sir! Look at this Spring Festival picture! Look at the bright colors!"

"How many pieces do you want, ma'am?"

Until a cry came from Zhou Jing, “Ah! Here comes the young officer again!”

Then the three of them ran away wildly.

This time, Li Jian pedaled on the tricycle while the other two ran on foot. Zhou Jian tripped over a bamboo pole and let out a dramatic cry, “Help me!”

Li Jian pedaled ahead hard. He wouldn’t be brought down by the others. Qin Guan took hold of the other end of the pole, and eyed Zhou Jing, asking him to run at the chance. Zhou Jing rolled to climb up. He turned his head to run away.

Qin Guan held the end of the pole tightly, swept away in some direction. Zhao Fengzhu was pulled over by inertia.

The middle of the pole hit a lamp pole with a loud sound. Qin Guan let go of the pole in time and turned to run. Zhao Fengzhu was taken by surprise. The bamboo pole shook desperately because of Qin Guan. Zhao Fengzhu couldn’t seem to get loose. He just shook together with the pole like going through an electricity shock.

The pole gradually stopped moving, just when Zhao Fengzhu thought his bones were about to break into pieces.

The young officer was extremely irritated. “You wait for me. I’ll fight to my last breath.”

Qin Guan and others met up and calculated their income once more. It was good. The young officer hadn't arrived too early. They could still make some money. They looked at each other and asked, "One more day?"

"One more day!" It was settled.

The same scene took place the next morning. They escaped successfully once again. Zhao Fengzhu's wide-edge cap hung on his crotch, swaying in wind as he sniffled and climbed off the tree he had ended up on.

Looking at the dusty cap, Zhao Fengzhu whisked the dust off and murmured to himself, "This is bullying! I'm not coming here tomorrow, okay? I'll go to the Sanzhan Morning Market." He returned to his squad like nothing had happened.

Meanwhile, the three boys were discussing together. "Our business is not bad these days, but the sales in the morning market will reach their limit soon. All potential customers will have made a purchase. We'll have to change our venue. "

Zhou Jing and Li Jian replied, "What about the Sanzhan Morning Market? It's far away from here." The decision was made.

The next morning, the three of them run into Zhao Fengzhu again in the Sanzhan Morning Market. The two parties looked each other speechlessly. The young officer stared at them bitterly and turned his face away, pretending he hadn't seen them.

They breathed a big sigh of relief. The alarm was over. They cleared their stock smoothly. After counting all the change and deducting the invested capital, they found that they had earned 530 yuan each.

They patted Qin Guan on the shoulder encouragingly, “See you on the next vacation, comrade.” They left fully satisfied as they counted the bills in their hands.

Looking at the change piled on the table, Qin Guan sighed slightly. The two of them were sure depending on him.

Qin Guan returned home in the evening. He gave his mother 600 yuan, including the amount he had earned during the vacation. At the touched expression in her eyes, Qin Guan said shyly, “Mom, I know it hasn’t been easy raising me. This is for your hard work. You can spend it on anything you like.”

Qin Guan’s mother didn’t look so touched anymore. Grabbing him by the ear, she shouted, “I raised you to such a tall young man! Is that all it’s worth? You little bastard!”



## Chapter 32: The Big Deal

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For Chinese people, the Spring Festival was the beginning of the new year. They did their shopping, had New Year's Eve dinner and paid New Year greeting visits or calls in the morning. Those were all the traditional activities.

When Qin Guan was done with those, he stayed at home for the rest of the day, eating and sleeping without any motivation.

Early in the morning, his phone rang non-stop. He stretched his arm from under the cover and shut it off decisively.

Only Huang Jiajia could be calling him at this time. She was currently in a cram school for winter vacation.

Before he could fall asleep again, short messages starting beeping on his phone one by one.

Qin Guan poked his messy head out of his quilt and picked up the phone angrily.

Several short messages from the same person were jamming his mailbox. The name of the sender was Xue Wanyi.

“Qin Guan, this is Sister Xue. I have something to tell you. Please call me back.”

“You bastard! You dare reject my call! You’re getting bolder!”

“Actually, what you are doing?”

“There’s a gig on the 10th day of the first lunar month. Do you want to audition for it?”

“Your sister really needs your help. I know that you are relaxing at home. How about I give you one third of the poundage? 500 yuan in cash and 3,000 yuan in a Carrefour shopping card. Just answer, yes or no?”

Qin Guan climbed up in a roll when he heard that last message. He texted her back, “Deal! Wait for my call after I return to Beijing.”

Receiving the short message, Xue Wanyi took a puff on the Moore cigarette in her hand, blew a smoke circle and got off the phone bitterly. Brat! All you want is money!

That evening there were eight of them sitting at the dining table at his grandma’s. His uncle, aunt, younger female cousin, father, mother and Qin Guan himself, plus the two gods above, all had a happy family feast together.

Qin Guan informed everyone of his plan to return to college earlier.

His female cousin heard about his plans for a part-time job with

heated admiration. My cousin is tall, handsome and a good student. Now he can even make a living by himself without any financial support from his family!

Liu Yi daydreamed happily, covering her round face, which looked like a small red apple. If this was ancient times and my parents were to pick a husband for me from my relatives, would I have accepted my older cousin?

Qin Guan had no idea that he was the Prince Charming in his cousin's daydream. He was just listening to his parents and his uncle chat. They were talking about rectifying and reformations, as well as the stock rights of their respective plants. The topic triggered Qin Guan's memory.

There had been quite the breaking news those days. Both the plants his mother and uncle were working at were carrying out some reformations, aiming to build up a group system.

They were planning to get rid of the unprofitable firm, which was ineffectual for the recalcitrant subordinates, and bring in new programmes to promote competitiveness in the corporation.

As a result, some plants would be merged together while some would be rebuilt. After the merging, new projects would be carried out. On what resources and capital, you ask? An internal pre-sale plan for the enterprise staff had been etched out exactly for that purpose.

They all had to buy internal stocks. The exact amount of stocks

rested on their personal willingness, but of course a minimum amount had been set.

At the time, workers were always the ones who got money from their plants, and they were reluctant to take money out of their own pockets.

On that year's Spring Festival, his mother and uncle had made the decision to buy internal pre-sale stocks, but stick to the minimum level. It was not easy for most people to make a living.

Things had gone bad. One of their plants had been renamed Oriental Electricity Group, while the other had been renamed Blue-White Group.

In less than three years, the former one had entered the stock market. The internal pre-sale stocks had gone from 2 yuan to 80 yuan. The Blue-White Group was counted as one of the biggest food enterprises of the province. Its staff got a large annual profit commission, according to the stocks they had bought.

Everyone attending the meeting that day was terribly regretful about the outcome.

Years down the road, when they recalled that day, they would still murmur to themselves. If only I'd done things differently at the time, we'd be a rich family now.

Thinking of this, Qin Guan stopped eating. He reached for his

purse and took out his debit card.

In his account was his scholarship and all the money he had left from his part-time job. He turned to his uncle and said, "I'll buy 5,000 stocks."

His mother hit him on his back with her fist, "You bastard! You just got some money, you don't know how to spend it. If you want to waste it, at least buy the stocks of your mother's plant."

Massaging his back, Qin Guan said with his teeth bared, "Your poor food plant can't enter the stock market. Do you even know what an emerging industry is?"

Then he pushed his card to his uncle. Afraid that his uncle would decline, he pressed on, "My dearest uncle, you and I are really close. Don't listen to my mother. Do remember to buy the stocks for me!"

Qin Guan's father was curious about this. He put down his chopsticks and said, "Tell us what you're thinking. Why invest so much money in this?"

Qin Guan couldn't avoid the question, so he cleared his throat and began to bluff, "Just think, this new government policy-whatever the results may be-brings both those plants directly into the game. We have to respond positively to the national call. The system is changing and we have to spend money. Of course this doesn't mean that we need to spend our entire family fortune. We could just buy a little more within our financial limitations. Worst

case scenario, we lose the capital, but we still make a good impression on our leaders. At least they'll consider that we're positively cooperating with the organization. Shall we do it then?"

His parents and uncle chewed his words for a while and found them reasonable. They discussed it together again.

Qin Guan was quite gloomy. If I tell them the profits will be 40 times higher, will they think I'm idiot? Reborn people felt so lonely in this world.

They made their final decision. Originally, his uncle had decided to buy 1,000 shares, which was the bare minimum. He raised the standard up a little and decided to spend 10,000 Yuan. Adding Qin Guan's investment of 10,000 Yuan, he would buy 10,000 shares in total.

His mother would also buy 5,000 shares, so it was 15,000 Yuan from both families. As to the stocks of his mother's plant, his mother raised the original 3,000 shares to 5,000 shares, and his uncle also decided to buy 5,000 shares. That was 10,000 shares in total.

Qin Guan made the calculations and found that it was much more than they had spend in his past life. Everyone will be satisfied.

It turned out that Qin Guan was wrong. When the results came out, the two families regretted it. They thumped their chests and stamped their feet in deep self-accusation. They couldn't believe that they'd bet all their fortune on those stocks.

At the time, Qin Guan was totally speechless. History had still not changed.

On the 8th day of the first lunar month, Qin Guan said goodbye to all his family members and took the train to the capital alone.

He arrived at his college to find the dormitory building deserted. After unpacking his luggage, he called Sister Xue.

She sounded so happy on the other end of the line, she couldn't seem to be able to stop talking. It's not every day that Qin Guan has some spare time. I have to take advantage of it.

It snowed lightly on the 10th day of the first lunar month. Sister Xue brought Qin Guan to Carrefour's headquarters in the capital. The advertisement department staff led them into the prepared photo studio.

People were placing goods and arranging the background. The person in charge of the Marketing Promoting Department was in a heated discussion about the shooting arrangement with several distribution businessmen.

Most of the goods the suppliers provided were shoes, clothes and suitcases, which were both cheap and good quality.

The monthly sales in hypermarkets could equal the annual sales of the small manufacturers.

That's why they made careful preparations and showed seriousness during Carrefour's seasonal sales promotion every year.

It was essential for their sales volume to have a prominent place in the poster.

The theme of this promoting season was the leisurely beginning of the new term. The main products were suitcases and spring clothing for the new season.

As required by the staff, Qin Guan changed into the clothes and shoes provided by the distribution businessmen and pulled a black draw-bar suitcase. He stood in front of a background plate of goods, displaying them with pride.

The lights and reflectors made the studio quite bright. Qin Guan massaged his eyes, trying his best to adjust to the brightness.



## Chapter 33: The Carrefour Poster

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Promotion posters were put up in supermarkets every month. Some of them were single-page, while other were whole leaflets. The quality was mediocre, though.

Several staff members picked at random from the advertising department acted as photographers. They asked Qin Guan to perform freely on the spot.

That's easy! Qin Guan dragged the suitcase behind him while he went around the room. When they were done shooting, they brought the camera over to have a look.

The photos were either blurred or vague. The photographer was an amateur without any professional training and as result, he had failed to capture good pictures.

People sighed at the photos. These are not good enough.

The person in charge of the Marketing Promoting Department shouted loudly at the photographer, "If you're lacking any professional ability, you should at least take honest photos!"

The photographer was not to blame. "I'm not well-prepared."

"You're so naïve, my boy. With your level of expertise, you would take the same photos no matter how many times you tried."

Qin Guan got an idea by the photographer's lack of expertise. They depend on me.

He pulled the drawbar of the suitcase up. With one hand in the pocket of his pants and the other holding the suitcase, he made a posture of stepping forward.

Seeing his posture, the man in charge of the Advertising Department was filled with artful inspiration. Actually, you're only a small-scale advertiser. His camera sounded again. In less than a minute, the series of photos had been finished.

The distribution businessmen were surprised at the sight of them. Dear me! Is that the same cheap products with the loose thread residue and the crooked seams on the pant legs?

The casual hoodie and loose sporty sweatpants with the 4-line logo copied from Adidas looked particularly gorgeous.

The sneakers on his feet also seemed comfortable beyond measure, and no one could tell that the suitcase cost only 50 yuan.

The distribution businessmen eyed each other and took their cellphones out one by one. They called for more merchandise while they talked with the person in charge of market promoting, demanding extra advertisements.

Sister Xue was not pleased with the distribution businessmen, who were pulling on Qin Guan. "Hey, what are you doing? Hands

off! Hey, you! Stop pulling on his sleeve! Take your hands off!”

She shouted to the person in charge, “The agreement was only for one series of photos! We’re finished, so we can go. What’s going on here?”

The person in charge agreed with her. “Yes, you businessmen are demanding more pages, but there are only so many pages in a Carrefour leaflet. We can’t present only your products! You’re too greedy!”

The businessmen seemed to think it was quite easy. “It’s only a matter of adding more pages. Shall the three of us buy one more page each? One for shoes, one for clothes and one for suitcases.”

They had a heated discussion, and then the person in charge muttered with the advertising department staff for quite a while.

The head of the Advertising Department rubbed his hands together with a smile and walked up to Sister Xue and Qin Guan.

Looking embarrassed, he said to Sister Xue, “Three more series, including clothes, suitcases and shoes. Just his legs, not his face. You’ll get double pay, OK?”

Sister Xue glanced at Qin Guan, who was already doing the mental calculations. Originally, it had been 500 yuan in cash and 3000 yuan worth of shopping cards. Double pay will mean 1000 yuan in cash and 6000 yuan worth of shopping cards. Sister Xue

will take one third, leaving me 700 yuan and 4000 yuan worth of shopping cards. It's a good deal!

It was easy to take pictures, and Qin Guan was itchy to earn more money at the time, so he nodded in agreement right away.

The distribution businessmen were pretty straightforward. They brought clothes for Qin Guan directly from the Carrefour stock, and Qin Guan began to change into them to take pictures.

He felt inspired. First, he tied the hoodie around his neck, pretending to be cool, and then he lifted the lower hem with lure, which made the female staff in the room hold their breath for a while.

The distribution businessmen were quite pleased with him. My jeans looked so stylish on his long legs. The shoes were quite beautiful with that elegant decorative pattern.

The businessman selling the suitcases was the most glad. Students preparing to go to college would regret not buying a traveling bag.

Qin Guan and Sister Xue went out of Carrefour and into the chilling wind outside.

Qin Guan stretched back his neck, complaining, "It's too soon after the Spring Festival. It will be quite a few days before the new term begins. I'll be all alone in my dormitory. Shall I do nothing

but stay in my dorm and think about the future?”

Sister Xue smiled to herself. That’s what I’ve been waiting to hear. Pretending to be quite stumped, she said to Qin Guan, “You’re right. How about you wait for my call to arrange some more part-time jobs for you?”

Qin Guan nodded, “Okay. If there are plenty of gigs, you could make me a tight schedule. I’ll be fine.”

Sister Xue answered immediately, “You’ve got it. Wait for my call and I promise to keep you busy.”

Qin Guan nodded again. Paying with the money he’d just made, he took a taxi back, feeling very pleased with himself.

In such a cold day, shall I have something delicious?

At the Doornail Meat Pie Restaurant beside the Capital University of Finance and Economics, Qin Guan asked for a bowl of cooked chopped sheep entrails happily. It went well with the doornail meat pie. He had a good meal, the scent of the food lingering between his teeth and cheeks.

The mutton sauce whizzed out from the yellow pie. His mouth was full of tender meat stuffing and crisp crust. Qin Guan was beyond satisfied.

He had a good meal and then he went to sleep. He didn’t dream

the whole night, Qin Guan received informative short messages from Sister Xue the following day.

He checked his phone. She's working really hard for me. He received the three following messages:

1. Serving at the opening ceremony of a new real estate agency. The ceremony will last about one hour. The pay is 100 yuan.

2. One-page printed advertisement. It's a foreign language learning advertisement that will appear at the bottom page of "Youth Monthly". The pay is 1000 yuan. It's unknown yet when the ad will be printed.

3. A product-releasing conference in the form of a cocktail party. A nouveau riche from the x region is trying to find a place in the business circle of the capital and wants to attract public attention to his new business. Several male and female models are needed. The requirements are to be charming, attractive, and have a good figure. The date is unknown and the reward is 2000 yuan.

Qin Guan was interested in the third message. What the hell is that? He called Sister Xue back.

She answered the phone. In a joking tone, Qin Guan asked her, "Hey, Sister Xue, what do you mean by the third one, huh?"

Judging by his way of speaking, Sister Xue was clear on what he was thinking. She shouted back angrily, "I am no pimp, I'm a

model agent! Do you know what an agent is? We have morals!”

Qin Guan thought to himself, That’s to be determined. The modeling circle is almost the same as the entertainment circle. They will both rot at some point. He said, “What did the message mean then?”

Sister Xue couldn’t help but explain, “Don’t think about it too much, Qin Guan. The man is trying to jump from the mining industry to the hi-tech industry. He has to bring some attractive people to enter the hi-tech circle. The cocktail party is just a by-product. The female models will make a show while the male models will be in charge of holding the products. You are nothing but a pretty prop, understand?”

Qin Guan nodded unconsciously, “I know, I know. Okay, Sister Xue. I’ll be there.”

Getting straight to the point, Sister Xue said, “You should go early tomorrow morning. The messages are arranged according to your schedule. Work hard. We’ll take them one at a time.”

Qin Guan wasn’t wordy, either. What would he do in his spare time? Sleep, of course. He had to have enough energy to work.

Qin Guan shut off his phone and missed a crank call from Huang Jiajia, leaving the girl grinding her teeth at home. She had hoped to monopolize Teacher Qin by taking advantage of his girlfriend’s absence. All she achieved though was Qin Guan shutting his phone off.

## Chapter 34: Three Small Gigs

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The next morning, Qin Guan stood on the stage of the outdoor square in a thin suit, the chilling northwest wind blowing through him.

The manager of the real estate agency was delivering his speech on the stage in excitement, froth forming on his mouth. The guests below were also in warm clothes. Qin Guan snorted his nose. Making money is hard.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Qin Guan and another male model carried the lottery box and went around the crowd. The guests would draw ten numbers, each number equaling 10,000 Yuan for purchasing houses.

After the lottery, the staff led the guests to the sales office to take a look at the sample houses, concluding Qin Guan's work for the day.

When he got off, Qin Guan immediately got his coat from Sister Xue and the two of them went to have a glass of hot water in the lounge area of the sales office. Qin Guan took a sip fast.

The hot water travelled down his throat as a warm steam rose from his stomach. Qin Guan instantly felt better.

Looking slightly concerned, Sister Xue asked, "Are you cold? This line of work is not easy. It's common for models to get frozen. "



Qin Guan was a little doubtful. Sister Xue was always energetic. This did not sound like her at all.

Sister Xue clapped Qin Guan on the back. “Are you still feeling cold? That’s all for today. Go back early if you’ve got nothing to do. We’ve got work again tomorrow. ”

Qin Guan saw Sister Xue off at the conference room, but he was not in a rush to leave.

The ceremony venue was in Fangzhuang, where a large community was currently under construction. There were new buildings everywhere.

Going around the exhibition hall, Qin Guan found that the price of the houses was not that high. It’s a pity that I’m a poor wretch right now. I have to put off investing in a house.

Qin Guan had to leave in disappointment and go to his second ad shoot.

This advertisement was much easier for Qin Guan. All he needed to do was take one specific pose.

I wonder if anybody has read old magazines like “Readers” or “Youth’s Digest”. There were advertisement pages in those magazines, some of them advertising study machines or promoting fast English lessons.

There was an introduction of the products that took up the whole page, and a photo of a student holding the products or books on the lower right corner.

The student in the photo would express his need for the product, which strengthened the reliability of the product and raised the public purchasing desire.

Qin Guan was that student. A series of photos were taken in one simple pose. He looked a lot like a bookworm in those black-framed glasses.

The director of the school was so satisfied with the photos that he decided to offer Qin Guan several French courses as a gift. Qin Guan thought this was a sneaky move on his part.

You're offering me only several hours of courses. How about the following courses? Do I have to pay for those or not?

Sister Xue wasn't talking much to him, either. When she got paid for the shoot, she led Qin Guan out and left without hesitation.

Qin Guan was a potential money tree in her hands. The boy had originally focused a lot on his courses. If he went to cram school, he would be too busy to take a part-time job, and it would be a great loss for her.

Sister Xue was still trying to persuade him as they went out of the

building, “Qin Guan, take it easy. Don’t exhaust yourself. Find a proper balance between work and rest.”

Qin Guan wanted to tell her that the courses couldn’t be simpler for him, but he still had to attend them. That was mandatory in college.

Qin Guan was studying at the Capital University of Finance and Economics, which was famous for its strictness, unlike some colleges for film or television studies.

Less than a day later, Qin Guan received another call from Sister Xue. She drove a small LADA car under Qin Guan’s dormitory to pick him up.

Fortunately, all college students were still on vacation, or there would be several stories to tell about the charming college boy and the middle-aged woman.

It was night when they arrived at the Chang’an Club. The colorful lights on the ballroom were lit up gradually while elegant dishes were placed on separate small tables.

The DJ in charge of the ballroom was playing slow music from backstage. Some people in casual but detailed clothes were gathering in groups of two or three, making leisurely conversation.

Qin Guan was waiting with a group of models backstage. Everyone was already in their formal wear.

The male models' suits were relatively normal, with black jackets and bows, while the female models looked quite sexy.

They wore one-piece dresses strung with tiny silver sequins. The dresses were as short as underwear. The girls' shiny white legs made Qin Guan dizzy.

Sister Xue coughed twice to remind Qin Guan not to look like a hillbilly. Qin Guan looked back at her with pursed lips, giving her a reassuring glance.

They waited until their employer, the host of the party, asked his assistant to inform them to take their positions. At the assistant's request, Qin Guan got up on the exhibition stage in the conference hall holding a display platter covered by red velvet satin.

The stage was quite bright under the strong lights, but the rest of the hall was dimly lit.

Models in silver short dresses walked among the crowd leisurely. They were holding trays with glasses of champagne and shaking their slender waists under the swaying lights to show off their beautiful figure.

The atmosphere of the party suddenly changed. From the bright stage, Qin Guan couldn't see what was going on below. All he felt was the surging atmosphere.

Occasionally, people interested in the products would idle up to Qin Guan's display platter. They would pick up the products to have a look, shake their heads and leave.

Qin Guan stood on the stage for more than an hour before the assistant signaled for him to get down.

Massaging his sore legs, Qin Guan glanced at the crowd in the hall unconsciously before he returned to the backstage area.

Some female models came along with him, taking a break from serving champagne. They leaned on each other's shoulders, or rested their long legs beside somebody else.

Beautiful lips, white legs and innocent charming smiles; everything looked so glamorous.

Qin Guan wasn't sure what he was feeling. He was still lost in thought while they changed clothes backstage.

Lighting a slim lady cigarette, Sister Xue told Qin Guan in a low voice, "None of them are professional models. You're doing this job for money, and so are they. The only difference is that they make more money in a more convenient way."

Qin Guan remained silent while he changed his clothes. Casting a cutting look at Sister Xue, he said, "I like my money to be clean."

Sister Xue chuckled, "That's what I thought. That's why I want

to introduce you to the circle. If you get corrupted, you won't go far. It's late, I should take you home."

The corner of Qin Guan's mouth rose. "I trust you. All the jobs you've picked for me have been pretty good."

Sister Xue drove Qin Guan to campus. Qin Guan waved at her before he entered his dormitory building.

Leaning back against the driver's seat, Sister Xue watched his retreating back as she murmured to herself quietly, "I hope you'll remember what you said today and you won't ever change."

The Capital University of Finance and Economics opened on March 5th, 1999, [the Day of Lei Feng](#).

Lei Feng (Jan. 18th, 1940-Aug. 15th, 1962) was a soldier of the Chinese People's Liberation Army who was renowned for his spirit of selfless contribution.

The university campus swarmed with the tide of returning students. All of Qin Guan's roommates were back, embracing each other warmly. Everyone was busy taking out local specialties from their suitcases to share with the others, whom they had not seen for a long time.

The luckiest person in the dormitory was Liu Xiaoyang. As a local boy, most of the specialties had been brought for him.

Liu Xiaoyang was holding an air-dried gigot brought by Mu

Lijiang. Yes, it was a whole gigot, carried from Mu Lejiang's hometown a thousand miles away. All along the journey Mu Lejiang had been surrounded by onlookers staring at it.

## Chapter 35: Liu Xiaoyang's Gigot

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Qin Guan and others were quite curious, so they asked Liu Xiaoyang, "What will you do with the big gigot?"

Liu Xiaoyang answered with pride, "I wanted it for somebody else. Qin Guan was right. I made new friends during winter vacation."

His roommates looked interested in his words, "Tell us more."

Liu Xiaoyang shared his experience of making new friends. "I paid ceremonial visits to other relatives in the neighborhood with my parents during the Spring Festival. I took a chance and chatted with boys who I was unfamiliar with."

"Although I'm very young, I'm a college student in every way that counts. Some of them had a lot to talk about and we became friends."

"One of my friends heard that one of my roommates came from Northwest China. Coincidentally, his grandpa was a northwesterner and in desperate need of authentic air-dried mutton. That's why I begged you to bring a gigot for me."

The others nodded. His new friends sounded quite reliable, so they said, "You could bring them to our dormitory in our spare time so we can hang out together. By the way, what do they do?"



Liu Xiaoyang talked about them with particular pride, “They are amazing! One of them majors in medical jurisprudence, another studies psychiatry, and the third one was in the intelligence department of a military college.”

His roommates scattered away as soon as he finished, going about their own business.

Could that boy make friends with reliable, common people? Those three could form a group to solve hard cases. It was surely impossible for common people to understand the world of a genius.

Confused, Liu Xiaoyang shouted to them, “Hey, come back! I’ll tell you how to perform an autopsy...”

No one was interested in corpses. They all ran away.

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When the new semester began, Qin Guan was busy. He had made a fundamental plan for himself. In the second half of the freshman year, the professional courses would start one by one, and the majority of his time had to be spent on those courses.

Qin Guan planned to take exams for various certificates as a sophomore. There was one year left till then. He could go about it little by little without a break.

The exams for the CET 6 would be arranged around at that time, and memorizing vocabulary was slow work.

Qin Guan's schedule was full. He had to give up the small part-time jobs, but Sister Xue arranged jobs on the weekends for him.

Product promoting had a low quality-value ratio, which had to end.

Finally, the domestic education of Huang Jiajia was left. With reasonable time and a good reward, he could keep that one.

The first weekend of the new semester, Sister Xue and the shirt factory came to an agreement. The first advertising poster of the annual contract would be shot at the same place.

Qin Guan arrived at the studio in Chaoyang Park. It was the same photographer who had taken pictures of him last time. He hugged Qin Guan encouragingly when he saw him walk in.

The photographer had submitted the photos he had taken last time to the organizing committee of a figure photography competition.

After the first selection, he would be informed about the results. Qin Guan smiled back with kindness. He always cherished the admiration of people who engaged in art.

The manufacturer of the J shirt paid special attention to the

advertisement shooting this time. As an ambitious boss, he didn't plan on selling his shirts by phone orders forever.

He was also in the hope of introducing his shirts to shopping malls and expanding the sales volume. Qin Guan could give him such a chance.

The effect of the last poster had been amazing. The customers who saw the posters were women shopping in supermarkets and malls.

When the housewives saw Qin Guan smiling brightly on the posters, they had automatically imagined their own children in them.

Pink will clash with his skin. This young man looks so energetic in it, though. The quality seems good. Oh, dear! This is a really affordable price. It's on sale, 60 Yuan each. I have to buy one!

The women had long forgotten the reality, which was that their boys were hoarse-skinned, black-faced and stocky-figured.

Every mother thought her son was as handsome as the model on the posters.

As a result, the phone sales escalated. There was a huge number of calls about the shirts.

The boss was very excited. His dream was coming true. With

vigorous zeal, he employed a designer who had just graduated from the design department of the Capital Institute of Fashion Technology, and rented a formal office beside Chaoyang Park, as well as a large warehouse in the suburbs. Of course, he also signed a long-term contract with the factory in South China.

Betting everything on this endeavour, he spent all the term's profits to make his shirts a formal brand.

He had come there with the designer. He met with Sister Xue, and the two of them had a heated discussion about the advertising contract. When Qin Guan changed into his first outfit, they made the final agreement.

Qin Guan's reward was raised from 3,000 Yuan to 5,000 Yuan for two more series of photos. The full-page shirt advertisement in the future would feature Qin Guan as the only model.

The lights were on. Qin Guan walked into the venue wearing the first shirt. The designer was excited at the sight of her finished product.

The shirt would be featured in the youth section of the spring collection. It was a white shirt with three-quarter sleeves rolled up and hollow lace around the collar and lower hem, representing the first stream of sunshine in spring.

At least that was the designer's inspiration. All the boss cared about was beauty.

When Qin Guan's stepped on the venue, everyone relaxed. Qin Guan rode on the edge of the wooden window frame with one foot stretched out.

His body was flecked with sunshine, looking like shiny drops of time. He inclined his shoulder gently into the window, moving it in close proximity to the photographer's lens. The photographer was quite excited. He pushed the shutter crazily to capture Qin Guan's warm smile.

“Okay! Change your pose one more time!” The photographer put down the camera and signaled for Qin Guan to take another pose.

Qin Guan moved back his foot from outside the window. He put his legs together and sat on the windowsill. Supporting his body with his arms, he leaned against the windowsill and stared ahead with a blank expression. The corner of his mouth was curled up as if he was smiling at the lens.

The photographer felt warm air blowing on his face. Qin Guan smiled gently and intently at the lens, making the hearts of onlookers throb.

The shoot went smoothly. Two minutes later, they were done taking photos with this shirt. While everyone checked the quality of the pictures, Qin Guan went to change into the second shirt.

The boss was quite satisfied with the result. He was not of a high educational level and couldn't use elegant words, but he knew what beauty and ugliness were, and whether the customers would

buy the shirts.

When Qin Guan came out wearing the second shirt, the designer starting getting nervous. She had spent most of her talent on this one.

No one noticed the detail on the light green shirt until Qin Guan walked in front of the camera.

The light went through the shirt and the decorative patterns were suddenly visible to the onlookers. Dandelions were floating slowly on the shirt. They seemed like they flying under the effect of the light.

Looking particularly excited, the designer explained her idea to Qin Guan, “The shirt is linked to the theme of spring. It shows the exuberant energy of spring, which is pregnant with infinite vitality.”

The photographer turned to the confused Qin Guan, “Don't listen to her. Listen to me. It's not so complicated. It's fine to show a sense of emptiness.”

What does “a sense of emptiness” even mean? Could you please break it down for me?

Noticing Qin Guan's blank expression, Sister Xue knew that something was going wrong. Grinding her teeth, she waved at Qin Guan. He walked up to Sister Xue, who murmured in his ear for a

while.

Qin Guan nodded and said doubtfully, “I’m good at that. The problem is whether it would work. Are you serious?”

Sister Xue pushed him toward the venue, “Listen to me. Hurry up. Don’t waste time.”

Qin Guan could do nothing but walk to the middle of the venue and do as Sister Xue had asked.

He opened his arms, closed eyes and relaxed the muscles of his face. With his head leaning back slightly, he took a pose for the photographer.

## Chapter 36: Huan Jiajia's First Test

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The photographer clapped his hands together. The model was embracing the spring spirit. With a wanton expression in his eyes, Qin Guan opened his arms, attempting to fly. That's wonderful! The click of the camera sounded again and again.

The photographer shouted loudly, "Good! That's right! One more pose!"

At his words, Qin Guan lay down on the floor at once. He curved his body slightly, his hands lying limply on his chest. His eyes were unfocused.

The photographer was over the moon. "That's it! That's the spirit! This is nothingness and mystery! Okay, keep it. Okay. That's a wrap!"

When the word "wrap" came out of his mouth, the designer burst into tears. Her teachers had always told her that the work of a good designer could reach a delicate resonance in collaboration with the model. When she was in college, the designer had never had such an experience. Qin Guan had excellently explored the ideas behind her creations.

She was extremely moved. The satisfaction of the completed work overwhelmed her.

The boss had already walked away excitedly to have a glass of water. He had gotten thirsty just by watching.



Qin Guan was still murmuring to himself. Is this what being drunk is like? That's what I'm familiar with. In my past life, when I used to sell machines, it was part of my job to drink with directors. You would be considered a snob if you did not drink. It was so simple for Qin Guan to recall that feeling.

While she stood to the side and watched, Sister Xue did not feel as optimistic as Qin Guan. She had just realized what she had neglected right from the very beginning. Qin Guan had never received any professional model training. He was an amateur, self-taught model.

On his first part-time job, Qin Guan had beat all the other models with his outstanding appearance and figure.

But what about the other aspects of the job? Qin Guan had never practised the professional catwalk and he was unfamiliar with the background of the fashion industry. Plus, he wasn't aware of the ideas behind the designers and the brands.

He makes a living off his face. I could pick up any random model from the bottom of the fashion industry, and their basic skills would definitely be better than his.

Thinking of this, Sister Xue felt very agitated. She took a slightly flattened cigarette pack out of her pocket and pushed the door open to go out and have a cigarette. Then she came to a decision. She threw the lit cigarette down on the ground and ground it with her foot before she returned to the studio.

By that time, Qin Guan had changed into his third shirt.

It was a traditional formal shirt. The only difference was that it was black. Qin Guan stood still against the lights. Everyone could see the silver silk thread woven into the cloth, which reflected light spots under the light.

The designer was proud of her inspiration. It was a subtle luxury that elevated the taste of the shirt.

The boss was satisfied as well. The 80 Yuan retail price is a little higher than the original 60 Yuan price, but the cost is only raised by 2 Yuan. The shirt looks like a high-quality one. It's definitely worth 80 Yuan.

Qin Guan was the most relaxed in this series of photos. He wore glasses with golden frames in an elite conservative style. He didn't need to strike a pose, his serious expression was more than enough.

The photographer finally shouted loudly, "That's a wrap! Let's pack up!"

The designer and the boss hastened to check the pictures. Sister Xue focused on the photos with the second shirt. She observed them carefully, letting out a long breath.

Naturally, after the shooting Qin Gun got an extra gift. The boss

was satisfied with the photos and paid him delightedly.

While they were preparing to leave, he told Qin Guan to keep all the shirts he had tried on. This part-time job had become his clothing source for the whole term.

Qin Guan got into Sister Xue's car so she could take him to campus. Sister Xue talked to him while she drove, "Qin Guan, can I find a trainer for you?"

Qin Guan was a little confused, "A trainer? For what?"

Sister Xue sighed, "Your modeling foundation is unsteady. I suggest that we find a professional trainer to teach you. Your appearance won't get you every job. You have to improve yourself in order to make more money."

Qin Guan nodded at the word "improve". "I hear you, Sister Xue. You can make the arrangement, provided that you leave me enough time for my courses. It won't hurt to study a little more."

Sister Xue was quite surprised with Qin Guan's reply. The little money grubber doesn't want to stop the part-time jobs and learn slowly. She had prepared a speech to persuade Qin Guan, but it was useless now.

Qin Guan got off the car, waved to Sister Xue and entered the campus. Seeing him off, Sister Xue found that she didn't understand the boy. She joked to herself, "Anyway, at least he likes

studying.”

Qin Guan returned to his dormitory, arranged all his new shirts and then went to Huang Jiajia’s house.

It was her first lesson for the new term. Qin Guan had prepared a set of papers for each subject so he could make a revision test for her.

Huan Jiajia was very confident about the papers. She listened carefully to the teacher at school. On the weekends, she had lessons with Qin Guan, and during winter vacation she had attended cram school.

She had made a huge effort on her courses, which made her confident about the scores.

After she finished the papers, Qin Guan announced the results.

Chinese: 98 (pass)

English: 80

Math: 66

Science:69

The total score was 385. She qualified for the College Entrance Examination for students who wished to take Arts Studies.

As an ordinary student, Huan Jiajia might only be able to enroll at a junior vocational school with such a score.

Huan Jiajia's mother was pleased. My daughter has made great progress. She could qualify for a junior college. Well done, Professor Qin! I haven't paid him for this term. I'll prepare 500 Yuan for him later.

Huang Jiajia was also satisfied with the results. As a second grade student in senior high school, I can get a higher score next year. I have shortened the distance between Professor Qin and me by one small step.

Qin Guan nodded and said to Huan Jiajia, "You did well! Try to keep it up. If you can get a B or more in every subject in your general examinations in June, I'll take you to Carrefour and buy you snacks."

Huang Jiajia jumped up at his words. "Really? Don't mess with me, Professor Qin!"

Qin Guan nodded and patted her head once. "I'll keep my promise. That's it for today. I'm going."

Qin Guan had won the popularity vote once again with his free shopping cards. He had sent a box of snacks to Cong Nianwei's dormitory. Her roommates called him the local tyrant. As for the shameless people in his own dormitory, Qin Guan was ashamed to be one of them.

They insisted on profiting at a rich person's expense and followed Qin Guan to do their shopping for free.

You, Ye Dong, drop that MP3! Do you want to remain good friends with me? That cell phone was not on the shopping list!

The design of the electric appliances at Carrefour was quite unreasonable. After they had finished their shopping, Qin Guan still had more than 1,000 Yuan left in his card.

Huang Jiajia didn't know that she was the last one to benefit from Professor Qin's card. He is definitely encouraging me. That's when she decided to make more of an effort.

## Chapter 37: Professor Li's Training Courses

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Qin Guan received a pack of money from Huang Jiajia's mother. He felt that the term would go smoothly with so many good things happening.

First, he had been praised on the professional course by the tutor, who had been deeply impressed by his performance in class. During a routine quiz, Qin Guan had accidentally given a detailed explanation about the next studying material.

As a result, the tutor believed that Qin Guan was enthusiastic about the courses. Although accounting was not a profound theoretical science, it could be considered an important subject.

It's exciting that my student studies in advance.

Wang Lei, who sitting beside Qin Guan, was left temporarily speechless. That evil scoundrel! He has more part-time jobs than me and only studies a little in the evenings. He has reviewed English ahead of time and studied the professor's courses in advance. Does he want to drive others mad? It seems like it'll be much more difficult for me to get the national scholarship this year.

Qin Guan was very pleased with himself. Following Sister Xue's instructions, he set out to go to the Capital Institute of Fashion Technology in a very good mood.

In the alley beside the Institute, he found the shabby house on

the address he had been given. He pushed open the groaning swing door, and was astonished by the scene inside.

There was nothing in the big spare space, except the standard T stage right in the middle of it.

All around the house there were piles of photoshoot equipment. Mirrors were hanging on the walls on both sides of the room, reflecting every detail clearly.

Sister Xue waved to him, and Qin Guan noticed that there was another person standing beside her. He ran up to Sister Xue.

She pulled Qin Guan over and pressed his head to take a bow before the other person. “Professor Li, this is my model. He has great potential. His name is Qin Guan.”

Qin Guan was forced to bow. He stole a glance when he straightened up again.

An elderly woman was standing opposite him. Time had already marked her cheeks with wrinkles, but she looked extremely elegant.

Her grace made people forget about her age and clothes, and focus solely on her. She was like a shining object, attracting people in an obvious way.

The woman scanned Qin Guan calmly from head to toe. Sister



Xue, who was standing beside her, put her cigarette nervously into her pocket, secretly holding it between her fingers before she put it down again.

The teacher sized up Qin Guan and said in low voice, “Turn around.”

Sister Xue immediately held out her hand for Qin Guan to turn around. “Turn around fast. Professor Li, have a look please.”

Qin Guan turned. Professor Li looked at him again and said, “Okay. Tell me more about him.”

Sister Xue signaled for Qin Guan to find a place to sit for a while before she started talking at length with Professor Li.

Professor Li raised her eyebrow slightly as she was told about Qin Guan’s resume, but she said nothing. Instead, she asked Sister Xue a question, “First of all, why did you quit modeling?”

Sister Xue was taken aback. She raised her head and then lowered it again, replying in a low voice, “Family affairs.”

Not inquiring any further, Professor Li said, “That’s your business. I’ll take the boy as a student.”

Sister Xue raised her head excitedly, “Really? Thank you so much. Thank you!”

Professor Li only smiled slightly, “Don't read too much into it. I'm only taking him on for his good looks. It would be a pity to see such good material go to waste without proper training.”

Sister Xue seemed quite excited by her words and nodded hard. “Exactly. Just look at him. Ordinary Asian people can't measure up to him.”

Qin Guan was unknowingly betrayed by Sister Xue once again. Professor Li waved to Qin Guan, who approached at her signal. “My place offers training for students every day. Xue Wanyi says that you are not a professional and that you have other courses during the day. You could come on the weekends.”

Qin Guan nodded. Professor Li continued, “You have to study the very fundamental skills. The speed of the courses will depend on your progress. Any questions?”

Qin Guan shook his head. I know nothing about this job. It won't hurt to follow a professional's instructions.

Professor Li didn't say anything about his cleverness. She asked Qin Guan to get on the stage and told him, “Let's start from the basics. Do you know the basic gestures of modeling?”

Qin Guan shook his head.

“How about the basic hand moves?” Qin Guan shook his head

again. Sister Xue began to sweat.

“Body posture? Pace? Standing posture? Sitting posture?” Qin Guan shook his head repeatedly just like a rattle drum. He felt faint. Sweat dripped down Sister Xue’s face under Professor Li’s sharp gaze.

“Shame on you, Xue Wanyi! You care about nothing but making money. Your reputation would be tarnished if others found out. How can such a model work for employers?”

Qin Guan and Xue Wanyi were cowering into a small corner, lowering down their heads like quails while they listened to Professor Li’s scolding. “Qin Guan, why you are squatting there? It’s not your fault...”

Qin Guan looked up at Professor Li. It’s better for me to squat, it makes me feel safer.

Professor Li was already tired from her lessons. She let out a long breath and told Qin Guan, “Look and listen to me carefully.” Then she shouted at Sister Xue, “Don't just stand there! Help us with note-taking!”

Sister Xue nodded like a chicken. She took out a small notebook and took notes obediently.

Professor Li began Qin Guan's first lesson, “Look, gestures are the most important things for models. The first gesture goes like this.

It's called finger-pressing. Your index finger has to be curved slightly to the front. Your thumb should press at the side of the middle pad of your middle finger. This gesture is flexible in modeling... Does it hurt? Relax and don't raise it, or you'll hurt yourself..."

Professor Li made the gesture. Qin Guan automatically opened the gift of his memory. His muscles adjusted to a standard gesture.

Professor Li glanced at his hand, "The second gesture is palm-showing. Your palm has to be open. Straighten your index finger, draw your middle, ring and little fingers close to each other and curve them up. It's one of the most common gestures during a performance." Professor Li switched to the second gesture and Qin Guan mimicked her.

Without any word, Professor Li changed gestures again, "The third one is called orchid finger. With your palm facing up, fold your middle finger and thumb. It looks like an orchid." Qin Guan mimicked her again without any trouble.

After Qin Guan had learned the three standard gestures, Professor Li suddenly turned to Sister Xue, "Xue Wanyi, you naughty girl! You dare try to cheat your teacher?"

Pointing to Qin Guan, she asked, "You mean to tell me that he's a beginner?"

Xue Wanye trembled at her tone of voice and looked at Qin Guan doubtfully. Qin Guan got up the courage to reply, "Professor Li, I

only have one advantage. I'm a fast learner. I can learn anything."

Professor Li laughed at his answer, "I have taught quite a few students, but none of them boasted like you. Okay, you say you can learn anything? We'll continue. Show me the double-hanging gesture."

"What does that mean? Professor Li, please tell me what it is, or at least show me."

"Are you really learning by sight?" Professor Li made the gesture doubtfully. "Curve your middle finger slightly to the front and press your thumb to the middle pad of the middle finger. Like this." Qin Guan copied her gesture perfectly.

## Chapter 38: Business With J Boss

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Professor Li was shocked by Qin Guan's performance. She was one of the first group of models after 1949 to be assigned by the organization.

She had been a model class tutor for the Capital Institute of Fashion Technology for many years, but she had never met a student like Qin Guan before.

He had been born a model. Professor Li was trembling in excitement. She pulled Qin Guan aside and told him, “Don’t study for college any longer. Accounting is not the job for you. That’s such a humble profession. You have been born to be a model. I can help you with college in some informal way, if you wish.”

Xue Wanyi really didn’t want to break the news to her, but she knew that Qin Guan was too stubborn to persuade.

She was right. Qin Guan kept shaking his head. Despite Professor Li’s over-excitement, he was adamant about the courses, “Professor Li, shall we continue?”

Professor Li could do nothing but go on with her lesson. In less than 10 minutes, she had taught him the basic gestures.

Qin Guan was practicing the movements while Xue Wanyi went outside to have a cigarette. I spent quite a few days on learning the basic gestures back in the day. They were non-standard back then. How can damn Qin Guan learn them so fast?

After Qin Guan had performed all eight gestures from beginning to end once, Professor Li asked him to perform them once more in random order. He did all the movements perfectly.

It seems that the second course will have to be taught sooner than I thought. Professor Li walked onto the stage and said, “A good hand gesture can have an unexpected effect to your performance. Your hands should be neither soft nor stiff, but balance your body comfortably. You have basically learned the hand gestures.”

The word “basically” is too reserved for him, Xue Wanyi said to herself.

Professor Li put her feet in position. “There are four kinds of foot positions-regular, separated, T-type and inverted V. I’ll show them to you one by one. Follow me...”

Qin Guan did well on all the positions.

They began the third lesson in advance as well. When their lessons for the day were finished, Professor Li, who was far from young, looked unbearably tired.

Qin Guan had begun practising his walk. The ordinary walk was a piece of cake for him. His skill could allow him to perform on shows in China, where stages were always straight and narrow.

Sister Xue considered herself lucky on their way back to Qin Guan's university. It may have been a good choice for me to quit modeling early. Qin Guan's performance really shocked me.

You haven't seen the half of it, Sister... Wait and see.

Spring blossomed in April while the J brand shirts appeared in the shopping malls of the capital. Taking advantage of Qin Guan's poster, the boss had made a big fortune and invested all the profits into building physical stores.

His stores entered hyper markets located in urban-rural development areas, including the Urban-Rural Storage shopping center, the new Merry Mart by the 4th Ring Road and the BHG market.

The rent of these markets was relatively low among the hyper markets of the Capital. There was a regular flow of customers, so the boss had bet all his chips on this endeavour.

The Urban-Rural Storage was the nearest venue to Qin Guan's college, which was located outside the 3rd Northwest Ring Road, and was the best location among all the J shirts stores.

It was surrounded by a lot of universities, like the Capital Foreign Language University, the Capital Institute of Technology and others. The customers were mostly college students.

Early on the morning of the grand opening, the staff pasted a



giant poster with Qin Guan's image on the glass window of the store. There were also mini pictures of him on the shelves.

The boss was sitting in one of the chairs meant for supermarket customers of the Urban-Rural Storage, secretly observing the arrangement of the new store. He kept pouring mineral water into his mouth nervously.

The supermarket opened at nine a.m. Customers entered the shopping center in twos or threes. Some of them walked out of the supermarket and were attracted by Qin Guan's giant poster from afar, consequently finding the shirt store in the corner.

The first customer entered, then the second. Later, a group of idling female students went by and studied the poster on the glass wall.

The boss hid nearby and listened to what they were saying, his ears standing straight.

“Oh, that boy is so handsome.”

“Yes, he has such a good figure.”

“There’s a dandelion on that green shirt. It’s really on the shirt, it’s not photoshop.”

“It looks so good. I’ll buy one for my boyfriend.”

“Let's go in and have a look.”

After discussing it, they all entered the store. After going around for a while, they exited the store again. The boss fixed his eyes on their bags. A huge bag with a “J” printed on it was carried out.

Sold! The boss was a little excited. More customers went in and out...

The boss observed the store for more than two hours. He forgot to drink water. He kept his body still, his eyeballs the only part of his body moving.

The flow of customers slowed down gradually around noon, which was when he remembered to have a drink. His hands shook from excitement and he poured water onto his pants by accident. The front of his pants was wet, which made a woman passing by burst into laughter.

The boss was in a muddle when the manager took advantage of the few customers to run out for a report. “We’ve had a good sale, boss!”

Ignoring his wet pants, the boss asked hurriedly, “How many shirts have we sold?”

“147 pieces! 97 pieces of 80 yuan and 50 pieces of 100 yuan.”

The boss jumped high upon hearing the figure. The leftover water in the bottle was added to the front of his pants.

The manager went on, “Many customers took our latest posters with. We have only ten of them left.”

The boss cared about nothing. He told the manager, “Find something that I can hide behind. I’ll go to my office and tell them to bring more posters.”

The manager nodded and returned to the store to fetch a giant poster of Qin Guan, “Boss, try this.”

“Whatever!” The boss put the poster, which pictured Qin Guan hugging something with closed eyes, in front of his pants and left quickly.

He missed the hushed discussion among a couple of passing students.

“Look at that creep!”

“Where? Oh my god! He is so disgusting. He covered his crotch with the poster of that handsome boy. These days it’s not so strange to star in porn films, but what does he do with that poster?”

If the boss had heard their discussion, he would surely have spit out blood and died on the spot.

As for Qin Guan, the meritorious model was lying in his bed. There had been no courses that morning, so it had been a good chance for him to sleep in.

People always called the four seasons sleepy spring, tired autumn, heavy-head summer and drowsy winter. The whole year was good for sleeping. Qin Guan curled up under his covers, not moving.

Around noon, Wang Lei couldn't bear to see him lying any longer. He pulled Qin Guan up from the bed.

Qin Guan was confused. "Hey, Wang! It's hard to get a free day these days. Why I can't sleep some more?"

Wang Lei kicked Qin Guan with his foot. "Get up! No one can enjoy leisure time today. Our eldest brother is running for vice-director for the Public Relations Department. All of us have to be there to cheer him up. In the evening, we have to accompany our other brother to his friend-making party."

"Friend-making party? Where?" Qin Guan got up in a roll.

Wang Lei touched his glasses, "It's not far from campus. Some students from the Minzu Capital University are hosting it."

"Really? Can I invite my girlfriend?"

“You have a girlfriend?” Wang Lei was surprised by the news.

“Yes, I forgot to tell you. Ah! Why are you hitting me?” Qin Guan covered his head as he ran off.

## Chapter 39: The Friend-Making Party

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Wang Lei was speechless. Qin Guan had been in hard pursuit of Cong Nianwei, but little did he know that he would be successful.

He was the first boy in the dormitory to get a girlfriend. Wang Lei had bet that Qin Guan would not get a girlfriend in college. He had lost 100 yuan.

Qin Guan finished his washing and called Cong Nianwei before lunch. If the party was in the evening, then she would have spare time.

The elections of the student union in the afternoon were extremely boring. There were only two candidates.

The Vice Director of the Public Relations Department was a senior who had no time for the job anymore, so he'd asked a freshman or sophomore to replace him.

Using his charm, Ye Dong had gotten the position without much effort. He became the youngest Vice Director in the history of their university. As for his application to become a member of the Communist Party? That was a question that Qin Guan, who lacked any political consciousness, could not answer, but he knew his application had already been submitted to the University Communist Party Committee.

In the evening, Qin Guan met Cong Nianwei at the entrance of the campus and introduced her to his roommates proudly. Under

their envious expressions, they held hands with each other brazenly.

They walked slowly to the Minzu Capital University, which was located three streets away from their university. The party would be held at the “Typhoon Shelter” tea house not far from there. At the price of 26 yuan per customer, people could enjoy beverages, cards games and mahjong private cabinets.

When they arrived at the Typhoon Shelter, the five girls of the other dormitory were already there. They paid at the cashier and ordered several drinks from the menu.

Mu Lejiang was quite shy. He had met with the girl sitting opposite him during the train ride back to college, which had lasted 26 hours. Their hometowns were quite near, and the girl was very beautiful. In typical northwestern style, her characteristics were deep and clear, featuring angled eyes and a high-bridge nose.

As a Dancing Major at the Minzu Capital University, her figure was excellent. She also had a beautiful name. She was called Ayimina.

The key to their acquaintance had been the gigot. During the train ride, she just hadn’t been able to ignore Mu Lejiang, who was carrying a big gigot and attracting too much attention.

As a curious girl, she had struck up a conversation with the boy and discovered that they unexpectedly got along quite well with

each other.

Of course, Mu Lejiang had other things in mind, and he'd asked her for her telephone number and address. Then he started contacting her daily to hear her news.

Ayimina had been annoyed those days. The eldest girl in her dormitory had just broken up with someone. Her ex-boyfriend though was not a gentleman and he kept harassing her, troubling the girl and annoying her roommates.

The girls had pooled their wisdom to try and find a solution. That's when Mu Lejiang had appeared like a knight in shining armor, promising to help them solve the problem.

Thus, he had organized the party and tricked his eldest brother into attending it, so he could pursue Ayimina.

That's right. [Mu Lejiang wanted to introduce the eldest girl to Ye Dong](#). If the two of them hit it off, then the ex-boyfriend will have to step back. What's more, Ye Dong and I will be dating two sisters.

In China, from ancient times, husbands of sisters always had a special relationship because of their wives. There was a special title for these kind of relatives, namely, "Lianjin".

Originally, Ye Dong had been opposed to the plan. After going to Typhoon Shelter though, he began to change his mind. Dancers sure are beautiful!



Let's forgive the boys their shallowness. They focused only on girls with limited IQ.

The atmosphere of the party was quite good. Both Mu Lejiang and Ayimina had feelings for each other. With their help, the members of the two dormitories had soon gotten familiar.

Cong Nianwei asked Qin Guan secretly, "If you didn't have a girlfriend, would you choose one of those girls?"

Qin Guan felt that this was the time to show his loyalty, "Of course not. A boy like me could only choose you."

Among the peaceful atmosphere, they heard a strange voice come from behind them, "Ah! So you're cheating on me!"

Qin Guan turned around and saw a boy standing behind their table, looking furious. He was sneering at the eldest girl, "How long has it been since we broke up? How desperate are you?"

The eldest girl, Guli, looked like she was about to cry. Ayimina couldn't bear it anymore and stood up, slapping her hand on the table, "Stop cursing, Guli is not in a relationship with you anymore!" Then she pulled Ye Dong over and pointed to the boy, "Can't you see? He is Guli's boyfriend."

The boy looked crazy as he came up to Ye Dong with red eyes, willing to risk his life. Ye Dong could handle him alone. He looked really weak.

They fought for no more than two seconds before the boy was pushed to the ground by Ye Dong.

The girls burst into laughter. The boy's face was red with anger. He turned around and left without a word.

Ayimina softly comforted Guli, "You see? I was right. He'll leave you alone if you get a new boyfriend. Ye Dong could fight three guys like him."

Qin Guan's roommates were also happy, "There is hope for our eldest brother. He can win the beauty over."

The atmosphere was joyful again. They were just discussing where to have dinner when the bell beside the door rang.

They turned around and saw the front hall fill with more than 30 people. Leading them was Guli's ex-boyfriend, who was talking excitedly with a strong-looking man while he pointed at them.

Qin Guan pulled Cong Nianwei closer and instructed her, "Go around the tables and along the aisle by the wall. You'll find the exit. There's a back street outside. You return to college."

Cong Nianwei considered it for two seconds, "Shall we decide on a meeting place instead? If I go home, I'll only be worried about you. After the matter is settled, I'll go back to college."

Qin Guan was taken aback. He felt moved. My girlfriend is so considerate. She is both reasonable and cares about me. Then he nodded, "Okay. You go out through the back door and walk along the small hutong. At the end of it, is Weigongcun bar street. Wait for me in the Red Star Bar." Cong Nianwei took her bag from her chair and asked him, "Shall I call the police?"

Qin Guan made a gesture under the table, "The staff will call the police. You don't need to call. You might get in trouble."

Cong Nianwei joined the onlookers and retreated to walk along the aisle.

Qin Guan released a long breath and turned to assess the situation. The group of people had confronted them.

They all had various weapons in their hands, including an iron tube and a mop, which they had obviously borrowed from somewhere.

Ye Dong was at a stalemate with Guli's ex-boyfriend. The strong-looking man stopped them from saying anything. He poked Ye Dong's chest with the iron tube, "Dude, you are not honest. It's not right to steal someone else's girl."

## Chapter 40: The Red Star Bar

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Guli was not afraid as she shouted at her ex-boyfriend loudly, “Leave me alone, you stalker! I must have been blind to be your girlfriend!”

Her ex-boyfriend’s friends were taken aback and turned to look at him.

He seemed a little anxious as he said to the leader urgently, “The bitch is slandering me.”

The leader hesitated a little before he put down his iron tube. Pointing to Guli's ex-boyfriend, he said to Ye Dong, “I have no idea who is right here. All I know is that he’s my friend, and you’re not. I believe him.” “

Guli’s ex-boyfriend was so glad, he raised his chin arrogantly and looked at her proudly.

Qin Guan knew that things would get bad that day. He looked at the girls again. He was worried about them getting injured.

The unfair fight was about to begin. Li Jie suddenly walked out from behind the crowd. Pointing at the strong man’s nose, he said in an imposing manner in his Sichuan Province accent, “F\*ck you, idiot!”

The strong man looked confused with what he had said. Li Jie

took advantage of his confusion and jumped into action. Using his flexible short figure, he ran under the strong man's armpit like a cunning snake moving out of its hole.

He rushed through crowd, jumped out of the ring of encirclement and reached the street outside Typhoon Shelter. Finally, he disappeared into the flow of cars.

Well done! Li Jie had made a successful escape. Let's stand up together and applaud him for his courage!

The atmosphere inside had gotten strangely silent. Some onlookers couldn't help but laugh.

Qin Guan was left speechless when a small ball of soil flew in from outside, accurately hitting the leader of the gang on the head.

It bounced off his hair and fell to the ground.

Qin Guan laughed. They all looked and saw Li Jie with leaves of Chinese ilex on his body, a pile of soil in his arms and a small ball of soil in his hand.

They immediately knew where the soil had come from. Before the leader could say anything, Li Jie threw a second ball.

You could tell he was a straight-A student. After calculating accurately all contributing factors, including the distance between the two of them, the acceleration of gravity, the parabolic inertial

and so on, his aim was spot on.

The second ball hit the leader's hair again. “You bastard!” Veins appeared on the guy’s temple as a third ball flew over.

There was a loud, clear sound as it hit him.

Everyone was surprised by the sound. The third ball had been quite large in size, but how could it have produced a sound like that?

The ball of soil fell down and rolled on the floor. As the soil on the surface fell away, the stone inside was exposed.

The leader shouted angrily at Li Jie, “You bastard! You dare hide a stone inside? Stay right there! Don’t run!”

Forgetting his original plan, the leader chased Li Jie with his iron tube. Some of his best friends followed.

Five or six out of the 30 of them disappeared. Qin Guan looked helplessly at Li Jie, who ran away after attacking.

His enemies looked even more helpless. They stared at the ex-boyfriend and seemed to be asking him silently, “Who are they indeed? And why can’t they follow fighting protocol?”

They would have to stretch their definition of fighting protocol.

Liu Xiaoyang jumped in and said, “Hey, I haven’t even said anything yet. Do you sons of bitches even know the rules?”

Pointing to the people opposite him, he went on, “This is a business place. If the waiter called the police, everyone would get into trouble. According to the rules, we shouldn't hurt innocent bystanders. Let's take this outside.”

Their opponents didn’t want to cause any trouble, either. All of them went out of the Typhoon Shelter and walked to the edge of the road. The two parties were at a stalemate. Mu Lejiang asked the girls to leave.

Ayimina was a little worried, and Guli didn't want to hide from her problems. Qin Guan and the other boys persuaded them to go to their campus so they could ensure the girls’ safety.

Realizing that the girls were about to leave, Guli's ex-boyfriend prepared to block them. His aim was his ex-girlfriend.

Liu Xiaoyang was at the peak of his excitement. He wouldn’t let the chief culprit go. He blocked the ex-boyfriend, pointed to the group and asked, “Hey, all of you, do you know the rules here in the capital? You have to declare your opponent first!”

He looked like a middle school student with his baby fat and short arms and legs, but he acted like he was the Godfather. They all laughed so loudly, they nearly dropped their weapons.

Qin Guan's roommates looked at each other to decide whether they stood a chance. Qin Guan pulled Liu Xiaoyang from behind and shouted loudly, "Run! Scatter!"

They all turned around and ran in different directions. The 20-plus people looked at each other and finally at Guli's ex-boyfriend.

He looked quite anxious. I called so many people for help. Is it over already?

The rest of them were thinking to themselves, It's not like we know the guy, we just came here because our leader told us to.

Grinding his teeth, the ex-boyfriend said, "Let's chase them separately." They divided into groups of four and five and followed their opponents. As for the ex-boyfriend, he headed to Guli's college instead. He had shrewdly foreseen that he would take a beating if he stayed.

There was a long distance between Qin Guan and his pursuers, which made things easier for him. After hiding several times, he had shaken almost everyone off. There were only two people following him when he arrived at the Red Star Bar.

Qin Guan pushed the door open and found Cong Nianwei sitting at the table closest to the bar. She was listening to the bar singer playing folk music while she rested her face on her hands.

Qin Guan plopped down on a chair by the table. He let out a



relieved breath and clicked his fingers to summon the waiter, “A bottle of Budweiser Beer.”

Gee, Qin Guan, you’re so relaxed. There are two people chasing you, and you’re in the mood for beer? The two men entered the bar holding an iron tube and two wooden clubs.

They spotted Qin Guan as soon as they went in. They got ready to give him a lesson. Before they could step forward though, they were pressed to the ground by the people sitting around the two tables by the door.

All they could see was a thick golden chain swaying before their eyes, shining. The owner of the bar hit their heads, which were pressed against the floor, while he said fiercely, “You little jerks! Where are you from? You’re so brave, huh? You dare try to make trouble in my bar? In Wang Hailiang’s bar?”

They were both in a daze. How could the young guys have known who Wang Hailiang was? Qin Guan took a sip of his beer, lay down on the table and laughed secretly.

## Chapter 41: A Successful Meeting

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The local bum children followed their eldest brother, who protected their profitable business. They had divided their sphere of influence clearly, and those who dared make trouble in their territory caused them to lose face. They would fight the intruders to death.

Qin Guan had been to the Weigongcun bar street in his past life. The street was under the influence of Wang Hailiang, the owner of the Red Star Bar.

Cong Nianwei poked Qin Guan, “Did you know the rules around here?”

Qin Guan gave her a meaningful smile and raised his eyebrows proudly. He held her soft hand and told her, “Sit back and watch the show.”

Qin Guan was just starting to feel proud when a man from Wang Hailiang’s table came over, holding a cigarette in his mouth. He knocked on Qin Guan’s table. “Young guy, is this your affair?”

Qin Guan looked up, a mouthful of beer sprinkling out from his nostrils. It was Bu Qinglu, the bum child beside the Landai Bar.

Qin Guan coughed while Bu Qinglu continued, “Well done! I see you have a new girlfriend.”

“What?” Qin Guan coughed more heavily. Cong Nianwei turned her head and pinched Qin Guan’s leg.

Qin Guan immediately explained to Bu Qinlu, “You must have made a mistake, brother. The girl you saw last time was my student. This is my girlfriend.”

Bu Qinglu patted Qin Guan’s shoulder in understanding and asked, “Every time I come across you, you’re in trouble. What happened this time?”

Before Qin Guan could explain, Wang Hailiang came over, his golden chain swaying as he walked. He greeted Bu Qinglu and then said, “What’s going on? Do you know him? Where’s he from?”

Bu Qinglu pressed his cigarette into the ashtray and lit another two for Wang Hailiang and himself. “This young man must have heard of you and your bar. He used you to protect himself.”

Qin Guan smiled shyly at them. Wang Hailiang looked quite proud as he asked Qin Guan, “Where are you from, young man? Have you heard of my reputation? You sure are giving me face.”

Qin Guan nodded quickly. “Brother Wang, I study at the Capital University of Finance and Economics. I just sought your help when I was in trouble.”

Wang Hailiang turned around and asked in confusion, “Is there some kind of society in that university?”

Bu Qinglu was speechless with his IQ. “He says he’s a student at that university, but he must have known you from somewhere. The boy is interesting, to say the least.”

Wang Hailiang laughed loudly and clapped on the table. He gave Qin Guan the thumbs-up. “Boy, you must be a top student. Alright, if you trust me, I’ll protect you.”

Qin Gun hastened to nod and reply, “All right. I’ll buy you a drink. Thank you for helping me today.”

“Bullshit! You don’t need to pay in my bar. This is my treat.” Qin Guan smiled again. He paid obeisance to Bu Qinglu and Wang Hailiang by cupping one hand into the other in front of his chest. The two of them went off to do something.

Not long after, two bottles of Budweiser and a can of Coke were served to his table. He also got a box of popcorn as a gift from a smiling waiter.

Wang Hailiang released the two men. He let them go with a warning, but kept their clubs. They both looked innocent while they ran away.

What on earth just happened? This doesn’t make any sense. There had been tens of people with us, but only the two of us were left. The guy who called us disappeared. We shall not forgive him!

The two of them joined the club of people wanting to beat Guli's ex-boyfriend.

Qin Guan finished his beer and realized that it was late. He bought a hamburger and a spicy drumstick at the McDonald's across the street, and then hailed down a taxi to send Cong Nianwei back to campus.

When Cong Nianwei opened the door, Qin Guan suddenly embraced her from behind, comforting her, "Little Wei, don't be afraid!"

Cong Nianwei stamped on Qin Guan's foot and got in the taxi. She waved her fist at Qin Guan while she shut the door.

Qin Guan massaged his foot as he watched the Xiali taxi drive off. He was both in pain and happy at the same time.

Nearly all the taxis in the capital had changed. The yellow minibuses had retreated to the rural-urban area, leaving the urban area to the red Xiali cars. Qin Guan stuck his hands into his pockets, humming random songs as he walked back to college lazily.

Wang Lei poked his head from behind a trash can in a residential area half a block away from college. He looked around and found nobody there. The street was silent.

Wang Lei stood up and threw off a vegetable leaf hanging from

his head. Where are you, you annoying cat? Why are you looking for food in a trash can while I'm hiding there?

The human and the cat were at a stalemate, the trash can the only thing separating them. When Qin Guan arrived, he found Wang Lei staring at the cat angrily.

He shouted at Wang Lei from afar, "What are you doing here? Did you just escape?" Ignoring the cat, Wang Lei walked with Qin Guan back to campus. "I threw them off. Why are you alone? I was waiting here, but I didn't see the others passing by."

Qin Guan told Wang Lei, "Let's wait for them in the dormitory. What's that smell coming from you?"

What's that smell? It's the smell of a trash can.

By the time Wang Lei finished washing in the bathroom and returned to their dormitory, Liu Xiao Yang, Mu Lejiang and Ye Dong had also returned. The only one missing was Li Jian.

His roommates were starting to worry about him. They owed their successful escape to Li Jian, who had attracted most of their enemy's hatred. He was weak physically, but his spirit was brave.

The leader's hostility had been focused mainly on him, so the pursuers must have chased him relentlessly.

They were just thinking about looking for Li Jian outside when

he came back, humming a nameless tune. He looked safe and sound. There was only some soil on his clothes.

After throwing the soil balls with the stones inside, he had observed his surroundings and escaped fast to the taxi stop at the crossing not far from there.

The strong-looking man had been ashamed and angry. He had fixed his eyes on the taxi, which had been about to start. Luck only favoured the well-prepared. Li Jian got in a taxi successfully, and drove around for a while before returning to college. After dinner, he slowly returned to their dormitory.

Sitting in their dormitory, they looked at each other and burst into laughter. This had been some dramatic girl-chasing, but the outcome had been spectacular. Not long after, the phone in the dormitory rang.

Mu Lejiang and Ayimina had an intimate conversation. They actually became a couple while Ye Dong confessed that he preferred girls from Northeast China.

They are all sensible young guys! Qin Guan thought to himself. With so many clever boys around, he felt some pressure. Although they were freshmen, they were already considering the chance of a long-distance relationship.

The affair faded in time, adding an interesting experience to their college life.

.....

Qin Guan was really busy. His weekends were occupied by Professor Li. He had stepped into the windiest learning stage of artistic conception, atmosphere and idea, which demanded the student's own understanding. Retentive memory didn't work at the time. It all depended on personal understanding.



## Chapter 42: Photo Studio Models

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For Qin Guan's free spirit, that kind of training was real training. Of course, he needed to adjust to the tedious courses. You're wondering how he adjusted, aren't you? He would do his favourite work, making money!

Sister Xue managed to squeeze into his tight training schedule a small job, a sample photoshoot gig for a photo studio. Qin Guan hadn't known the difference between a sample photoshoot and a formal poster shoot until he got to the makeup room of the studio.

First, the makeup artist applied a thick layer of powder on his face. The rouge and powder were pasted on his face, making him look quite uncomfortable.

Qin Guan had to wear several layers of clothes. A shirt, a waistcoat, western-style clothes that, in combination with the hot lamps above, would make any model sweat. Qin Guan was so hot, he could feel sweat stream down his back.

For fear that the sweat would influence the effect of the photos, the makeup assistant fixed his make-up with a powder puff again and again. Qin Guan felt like there was a powder mask on his face.

First, they took solo photos of him. His poses were quite simple. He stood against the decorative pergola with his head slightly bent forward and his neck exposed. Then he turned around to show his sides. After several clicks, the photos were done.

The next series was even simpler. Qin Guan sat on a chair with his legs crossed, both his elbows on the armrests of the chair, and his hands crossed.

The theme of the photoshoot was royalty, and Qin Guan's clothes were edged with rolling lace.

The loose western-style clothes were clipped around his back by the assistant to make them fit better and set off his slim waist.

It took him a total of ten minutes to finish the first two series of photos. A female model showed up for the next one.

In the first series they shot together, the female model sat on a chair while Qin Guan stood behind her, holding onto the back of her chair. His body was leaning forward like he was embracing her from behind.

The pose was quite simple, and the photographer captured it easily.

In the second series, they had to stare at each other with deep affection. Qin Guan had to put his arm around the model's waist, and she had to put her hand on Qin Guan's shoulder.

They got prepared as the assistant arranged the long hem of the dress properly in European style. The hem was spread around the ground in a beautiful arc.

The photographer checked the indoor lighting through his lens and said, “Okay, models get ready. Face each other. Right. Good! Look at each other with love.”

Qin Guan looked down and noticed the girl’s false eyelashes mixing with her real ones. They were sticking together like a fly’s legs, making him want to laugh.

Meanwhile, the female model was thinking to herself happily, My partner is so handsome this time, much better than my usual partners. She was daydreaming about a potential love story while they worked.

Suddenly, Qin Guan burst into inappropriate laughter during the photoshoot. The girl was so angry, her face turned grey.

Sister Xue covered her face helplessly. Qin Guan was acting silly again! She immediately waved Qin Guan over and warned him, “Can you be more serious? Do you remember Professor Li’s words?”

Qin Guan coughed somberly and answered, “No matter the conditions, I should remember and stick to professional model integrity, which consists of seriousness and concentration.”

Sister Xue clapped him on the back, “Then why did you laugh? You pissed me off again!”

After getting beaten by Sister Xue, Qin Guan walked back on set.

He made a shy bow to the photographer and smiled at the female model apologetically, “I’m sorry for my mistake. I’ll ask the assistant to redo your makeup after the photoshoot. I didn’t mean for that to happen.”

The female model was still confused when Qin Guan suddenly found the right feeling. It’s simple to express deep love. I will just imagine she’s Cong Nianwei. Let's do this.

The photographer shouted to the models, “Okay, look at each other with deep love. Good! Young man, look down a little. Well done!”

Click, click. The series were finished smoothly. When Qin Guan moved on to the next shoot, the female model was still there, lost in thought.

At the photographer’s request, Qin Guan’s eyes filled with emotion.

He looked at her as if he had something to say, but something was stopping him. The female model was lost in his emotional gaze.

Under the photographer's instructions, Qin Guan changed his expression at once and left without any delay. Before the female model knew what had happened, he had disappeared.

When the assistant came over to remind her to change into the

second costume, she remembered something and pulled on the assistant's arm, "Where is the dresser? I need to redo my make-up." The assistant looked scared and pointed at the makeup room in a hurry.

While she got her makeup redone, the girl realized why Qin Guan had laughed. The false eyelashes had two layers of lashes, and as a result made her eyelids look like they had three layers. Although at post production she might not even recognize herself in the photos, the dresser should still have been more careful.

When her makeup was done, she changed into her costume. Qin Guan was already dressed.

He was wearing a formal European-style suit in royal blue, double-breasted with firm pads on his shoulders.

His jodhpurs were stuffed loosely into his long black riding boots. Qin Guan looked like a soldier in an oil painting of the Middle Ages.

Qin Guan's work for that day would be finished after one more series with the female model.

They shot against a dark yellow curtain to show the feeling of times past. In Qin Guan's opinion, the photo studio endeavoured to create the atmosphere of a blockbuster film starring ordinary people. The setting was pretty simple, but their costumes featured great attention to detail.

The female model was standing in the middle with a long European-style dress supported by an iron pannier. She also wore a corset and a waist girdle.

Qin Guan lowered his head to kiss the girls' hand, bending down on one knee. He kept that pose for five whole minutes before he moved on to the next one.

After the work of the morning was finished, Qin Guan washed the thick powder off his face with a deep cleansing oil provided by the studio. Finally, his skin could breathe. (He would have to put makeup on again after lunch.)

Sitting in the dressing room, Sister Xue talked with Qin Guan about his plans for the future. "The studio will divide your payment into two parts. For indoor shooting, you'll get only 600 yuan. The outdoor shooting will be more troublesome, so they will pay you 2700 yuan. These jobs are mainly print media photoshoots. Professor Li said that you shouldn't walk the T stage yet, so there will only be one exhibition meeting and a poster in the first half year. You should study carefully in your spare time. When Professor Li thinks that you have finished your courses, she will make an arrangement for you."

Qin Guan was taken aback and asked, "How about you?" Sister Xue glanced at him helplessly. "Professor Li said that if you finish her courses successfully, I could become your private guide."

Qin Guan looked at her with sympathy. "But then you wouldn't make much money. I can only work on weekends."

Sister Xue didn't drop her idea though and tried to persuade him, "Think about it, Qin Guan. Models have a bright future. Professor Li and I have enough contacts, so you wouldn't starve."

Qin Guan told her seriously, "I'm preparing to take my accounting certificate in sophomore year. Then I'm planning on working on commercial accounts for others. When I have two years of working experience, I will be able to take the exam to become a certified public accountant. My roommates and I have decided that we'll be self-employed as soon as we graduate. My dream is to build a business empire with my bare hands. Being a model is just not enough for me."

Sister Xue's lips quivered. She wanted to go have a smoke outside to see if there were any cows flying in the sky [1].

Qin Guan didn't want to say much more. He just waited for his lunchbox happily.

It was the end of the morning shoot. Everything's been smooth, hasn't it?

# Chapter 43: The Cathedral Church

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The assistant brought them their takeaway lunchboxes. Sister Xue took two and handed one to Qin Guan.

Qin Guan sighed at the box in his hand. The white foam plastic material was so unhealthy [1].

Opening the box, he sighed again. At that time, lunchboxes were really made with care.

As a chain lunchbox business, Lihua Quick Meal had initially started as a small kitchen before it began its hard journey through the capital, equipped with only a couple of phone lines and a few delivery men.

It cost only ten yuan for a whole box of rice, a portion of meat fried celery, chicken leg stew and a fried egg. Taste aside, that price was quite reasonable.

Sister Xue talked with Qin Guan while she ate, “Did you decide about what Professor Li told you last time?”

Swallowing the celery in his mouth, Qin Guan answered, “I could only do part-time jobs. What's the difference between signing a contract and not signing one, anyway? Aren't you afraid of destroying your reputation?”

He swallowed another mouthful of rice before he added, “Plus,



after signing the contract, you can only work for one person. I won't have that much spare time. You might starve because of me.”

The sinister smile of a businessman formed on Sister Xue's face. She waved her index finger in front of him and said, “No, no, no. I could make more money by working just for you.”

Qin Guan thought while he ate. He waited curiously to hear her explanation.

“Don't you know that, Qin Guan? Models are divided into different classes like merchants in the market.” She excitedly picked up a cigarette. Then she remembered that she was in the studio, and just kept it between her fingers.

“The levels of models, from bottom to top, are Untrained, C, B, A, A+ and Top Models. Their value and income depend on their level. You know you are at the bottom now as an untrained model. I can only get you small gigs, like third-rate poster shoots and exhibitions. T stage shows are monopolized by the big talent agencies. Unless you're a top model, you can only dream of performing on a T show.”

Qin Guan swallowed the last mouthful of rice and asked, “Why you are so confident about me? I'm only a greenhorn doing part-time jobs.”

Sister Xue suddenly lay flat on the sofa helplessly. “If Professor Li says you can do it, then you should be able to. I'm a little afraid, in

fact.”

Qin Guan laughed and patted her on the shoulder. “I’ll talk with Professor Li next time I see her. I’ll think it over.”

After everyone finished lunch, the assistants packed up all the costumes and props and carried them to their car. They followed the studio car to Xizhimen in a formidable formation.

The site was the Xizhimen Cathedral Church, which was quite close to Qin Guan’s college. People always called it the Western Church. It was one of the four cathedral churches in Beijing, located at 133 Xizhimennei Street in the Xicheng District. Being the newest and smallest out of the four churches, it was the only one that hadn’t been built by the Society of Jesus.

The car arrived at the entrance of the church. They arranged the equipment and props, and folded out the chairs and dressing table into their proper places. The old guard opened the gate for them, the key quivering in his hands.

Before he left, he reminded everyone, “You have only one afternoon. Be careful and don’t cause any damages inside.”

Qin Guan got out of Sister Xue’s car and observed the church carefully. In his past life, he had lived in the capital for so many years, yet he had never visited it.

He walked slowly to the main gate. The Lady of Mount Carmel

Church, was a Gothic building with independent clock towers. On the entrance wall, Qin Guan found a stone tablet with the history of the Western Church carved on it.

The tablet inscription read as follows.

Tablet Record of the Rebuilding of the Lady of Mount Carmel Church

May our holy religion always protect the common people. In thousands of years, our church has experienced both prosperity and hardship. Fortunately, the Lord's mercy and spirit were always with us. May the Lord continue to be with us...

The surface of the building was covered in thick ivy. The whole church looked impressive compared to the buildings surrounding it. The front north wall was connected to the original north wall, and the Cerro San Cristobal was indoors. It was actually the only indoor Cerro San Cristobal in Beijing.

The mottled clock tower had collapsed, leaving only one octagon abutment at the second floor, north of the main body of the church. Visitors could feel the aesthetic of the broken, ancient building.

The photographer put his equipment into place. First, they would take the outdoor photos.

Qin Guan wore an orthodox wedding costume with white gloves.

The ancient double-row European-style cuffs were shining bright under the sunshine.

He gently put his hand against the wall of the church. The white glove and pied cyan bricks created a sharp contrast, like a scroll travelling through time to show people a picture of times past.

Qin Guan looked calmly ahead, picturing the future. He seemed to be waiting for his lover in the silent afternoon.

There was a lot of light and wind, so the photographer had to change his angle several times. It took longer than the indoor shooting, but Qin Guan still finished the photos easily.

There were only two series of indoor photos left to shoot.

They waited until the female model had finished her photos at the front door of the church, and then the assistant pushed the ancient, squeaking gate open and they entered the church. Qin Guan was surprised by the scene inside. What a sharp contrast!

With its tall Corinth pillars and pinnacle windows, the inner part of the church was grand and gorgeous. Rows of wooden benches were shining with paint. The European relieves on the pillars and their colourful glaze were unparalleled in beauty.

The long aisle was covered with a red carpet. Qin Guan and the female model were standing by the benches, one in front, the other in the back, their heads turned as they looked at the photographer.

The white pillars, red benches and black curtains behind them added a mysterious atmosphere to the whole picture.

They adjusted their expressions and smiled at the lens at the photographer's request. The photos were finished without trouble.

In the last series of photos, Qin Guan had to kiss the girl's hand in front of the sacrificial altar. He bent his tall figure and touched his lips to the back of the girl's hand, which was covered by a lace glove. Through the lens, the picture looked quite beautiful. Four golden praying vases were around them. The white sacrificial altar and round vault looked intimidating.

Wearing a black swallow-tailed costume, Qin Guan kissed the bride carefully and sincerely. His long, straight legs and slender waist made women crazy.

The photographer was quite satisfied. The models are very dedicated to their work. They do whatever I ask them to. The sample photos are ready for the customers. Beauty is our priority. A nameless model who insists on displaying their charm and features would look ridiculous in these photos. Customers would not be interested in that.

In China, the material of throw-away lunchboxes used to be white foam plastic, which was harmful to people's health. About 20 years ago, it was changed to more healthy materials nationwide.

## Chapter 44: [Nations Of Mi And Cowboy](#)

To maintain world peace, all nations mentioned in this chapter were given a nickname.

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The photos were finished. The person in charge paid Sister Xue for the day and expressed his wish to collaborate with them again. You see, with enough seriousness, we get good results.

Qin Guan entered his dormitory and collapsed on his bed. He was tired after working the whole day. He closed his eyes to rest his mind while he considered the contract.

Actually, signing a contract with Sister Xue will make no difference. Sister Xue will still find jobs for me just like she is now. Will it have any other influence on my life? I don't think so. On the contrary, my life will become more regular.

Qin Guan couldn't imagine becoming a superstar. He was still on the way to becoming a qualified accountant, which was a much more down-to-earth career path.

His roommates came back one after the other while he was lost in thought. Liu Xiaoyang was about to climb into bed when he suddenly looked down and noticed Qin Guan's face.

With a cry, he jumped off the ladder, pointed at Qin Guan's face and said, "Reveal your true identity, vampire! I can't be wrong. Only your legendary race could be born with such a face. Show your true colours, you evil creature!"

Qin Guan touched his face helplessly and felt powder on his hand. He had forgotten to clean his face before Sister Xue had driven him back to college.

He got up and beat Liu Xiaoyang before he picked up his facial cleanser and went to the washing room.

He had to wash his face thoroughly three times before he felt clean.

.....

What happened in the first half of 1999? A lot.

There was a conflict between the over-confident Cowboy Nation and the Han Dynasty.

College students all around the country were excited. They were angry and loud. The battle has begun! Let the storm come!

Hot-blooded students were considering participating in the war. We need some weapons! It's rumored that the people of the Cowboy Nation are quite strong.

It was a windy night and the moon was shining dimly. Headed by the QH Student Union, the backbone of different colleges sneaked to an alley beside the Cowboy Embassy under the cover of the night.

Actually, the real story went like this: It was early in the evening, and people getting off work were heading home for dinner, when several sinister young men with worn backpacks containing bricks prepared to knock down some Cowboys.

They waited until the gate of the embassy opened and the staff members left the building. Then they separated to take action.

Ye Dong waved to Qin Guan and the others, signaling for them to follow a tall Cowboy with blond hair and blue eyes.

You didn't read wrong. As a leader of the Student Union of the Capital University of Finance and Economics, Ye Dong was the leader among a group of weak workmates. He had been selected as a representative of his college to participate in a joint activity of college students from all over the capital.

Returning to their dormitory, Ye Dong felt restless. If they relied on his partner's girlfriend, they could get exposed.

Good brothers shared each other's fortunes, so Ye Dong allowed his roommates to join.

The six young men discussed it and thought of a safe plan that they were confident would work.

Following the man, they had already crossed the street and walked into the alley beside it that Liu Xiaoyang had already



checked.

When they were done, they could head through the alley to the Ritan Park and escape into the night.

The man entered the alley. Ye Dong waved his hand. The girl kept watch outside as the six of them covered their faces with black cloths and launched themselves at the man.

They pressed him to the ground and beat him with their bags and fists.

Basile was confused. He had just been walking home peacefully when several masked men had attacked him and started to beat him. He was in horror as he shouted for his life, "I'll give you my money! Stop, please!"

Liu Xiaoyang kicked him and said, "We're not robbers. I'll let you know when your death is near."

"Remember, you bastard. You Cowboys will never do as you want. The people of the Han Dynasty are courageous and upright!"

Basile looked like he was about to cry. "I'm not from the Cowboy Nation! I'm from the Fragrance Nation!"

His Chinese accent sounded strangely like he was from Northeast China. By then, the students had realized that something was wrong. Ye Dong poked him with a small stick. "Can you show us

an ID?”

Quivering, Basile took his wallet out of his pocket and drew a Fragrance Nation driving licence out.

Qin Guan glanced at the licence. It read “Basile”. That’s really a Fragrance name. They looked at each other. What now?

Wang Lei acted quick. He took the licence and handed it back to Basile. “Dude, have you heard of the recent conflict between the Cowboy Nation and the Han Dynasty?”

Basile nodded. Wang Lei continued his story, “You lucky dog, do you know how many Cowboy Nation people have been beaten to death in this very alley?”

Basile shook his head again. Wang Lei sighed, “Nine, including seven Cowboy men and two Clock-Tower men. People with blond hair and blue eyes get killed because they look like Cowboy men.”

He bent down to pat Basile's shoulder encouragingly before he went on, “Do you know how lucky you are? Thank god you revealed your nationality, or you would have died for no reason.”

Basile suddenly felt happy for his luck. Wang Lei talked him into dying his hair black. “You will be safe if you follow my suggestion. You’ll avoid people mistaking you again. Others may not let you go as easily as we did.”

The six students patted his shoulder one by one courageously and left the alley quietly.

They called for the girl keeping watch at the end of the alley and ran fast toward Ritan Park. They sat on a bench in the park and took off the black cloths, looking at each other while they laughed. What the hell was that?

Hunger often followed joy. They forgot their original purpose and decided to have a good meal to celebrate their success.

The girl couldn't bear to remind them that they had achieved nothing that day. Looking at their shining eyes, she didn't open her mouth. Besides, they planned to take her along with them, so she just followed them happily.

# Chapter 45: Eldest Brother's Day

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Basile's accent reminded them of the dishes in northeast part of China, which they would like to have a taste.

Fortunately, there was a restaurant of northeast taste in the Jinbao street not far away.

The seven students were sitting around the big table. Ye Dong was in charge of ordering.

As a big fellow from northeast part of China, he had a voice most on the dishes of his home town.

They lost their reserved manners as soon as the dishes were served. The girl of student's union was surprised at the scene.

“Eh, you, Qin Guan. Return me the sour and sweet pork to me! You are so greedy! Loose your sticks.” Wang Lei and Qin Guan were fighting for a piece of sour and sweet pork.

“Ye Dong, will you eat the table with a handful of cumin? Don't blame me for disgusting. Dare you eat the last stick of blood sausage? Fuck, you really eat it. If [Ma Yun](#) asks you to give you ten million yuan in case that you eat shit, you'll eat until he go bankrupt.”

Ma Yun: One of the richest men in China.

“For a blood sausage, Liu Xiaoyang put shit onto the dining

table.”

The girl covered her face without a word. Mu Lejiang and Li Jie were reciting poems at other side of table.

They combined sentences from traditional Chinese poems and name of dishes together, which were good jokes for others.

What talented people! They made poems even for food!

The roommates of Ye Dong's dormitory are quite imitating. The girl stolen a glance at Ye Dong. He looks so bold, a good man indeed. She was blushed slightly.

Congratulations on Ye Dong, who got a girl's heart unconsciously.

As an expert of love affairs, Li Jie discovered it at one glance.

Actually, Ye Dong had some feelings about the girl. They were both in the society of public relations, one of whom was in charge of internal affairs, while the other arranged the external affairs.

They met with each other at work. At that time, Ye Dong initiatively asked her to be together for the activity.

The most important reason lied in her hometown. She also came from the northeast part of China. But Ye Dong won't confess his

wicked intention. The girl's height goes well with me.

Generally speaking, people of northeast China were tall. Ye Dong was of 190 cm, who matched well with Yang Jing with the height of 170 cm.

Yang Jing was the name of the girl. Her name was elegant and silent, while she was quite rash and too much in haste.

Ye Dong was obsessed with her. For a long time Ye Dong often mentioned her in his dormitory, “Eh, you know, today Yang Jing...”

His roommates' ears were filled with her name. Finally, they met her personally that day.

Li Jin found the scene was hopeful for Ye Dong.

He continued to stir up, “Eldest brother, why don't you present Yang Jing with a cup of tea? The little girl worked for us today. We should thank her for her effort.”

Ye Dong was heavily blushed. His face was nearly purple.

Ye Dong, pushed by others, walked to Yang Jing with his hand and foot of the same side. He took the white tea pot to pour a cup of tea for Yang Jing, who was also ashamed. She took a sip.

The others were shouting, “Cross-cupped tea, cross-cupped tea.”

Yang Jing’s face was nearly buried under the table. Ye Dong rushed to beat them.

There was a mess on the table, while the atmosphere was quite good. The hanging moon was so ashamed to be together with such shameless guys that it furtively hid behind dark clouds.

The seven persons, with shabby backpack, were on their way back to college threading on the light of lamps. Their stomachs were filled with northeast dishes, which made everything warm.

The conflict with Cowboy nation was finished with much cry and little done. For college students, it was small adjustment in their lives. Their main task was exam.

Several subjects were finished in advance before the summer vacation. The tutor knocked on the name list to revealed his dangerous intention with subtle smile.

The attendance rate of ordinary time unexpectedly took 25% of the final score, which made his class in an uproar.

Someone was happy while someone worried. Qin Guan and Wang Lei were calm, who were on the way to straight-A students.

Some classmates who made efforts at the last moment surrounded Wang Lei to ask for his notebook for copying. Taking

the chance, Qin Guan sneaked away.

If they saw Qin Guan's note, they might beat him to death.

There was only outline for the subject on Qin Guan's notebook. The whole course had already finished and he had taken only one page of note.

With such a note book could he get full scholarship? No one would believe. Qin Guan had to run away with his note.

Sister Xue's call arrived when he just entered the dormitory. She found a job for Qin Guan. It was for a mini car exhibition. The model had to stand for a whole day. The payment was just so-so, which was 1500 yuan.

But it was difficult for her. Qin Guan received jobs only in weekends. He had to take training courses and taught a girl student in the evenings.

Teacher Li forced her to serve only for Qin Guan. She had to get all the possible jobs, or she would starve.

Qin Guan had no idea of her bitterness. He thought it was quite a good job with 1000 yuan per day. Since the Spring Festival, he had made nearly 10000 yuan.

Qin Guan read the short message and called Cong Nianwei to ask her if she would like to pay a visit.



He got through. Five minutes later his hand was hanging down. Cong Nianwei was busy. He was abandoned relentlessly again.

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Take it easy, he said to himself. But on the day of car exhibition, Qin Guan was in worse mood.

He got double attack in both physical and emotional level, which made him withered.

Weizi paid no attention to me. The bus arrived at the terminal stop. Standing on the yellow ground as far as my eyes can reach, where I can find the inexplicable exhibition?

He couldn't get through with Sister Xue.

Qin Guan was looking around blankly when a tricycle suddenly appeared like a god descending from heaven to the earth.

The driver smiled warmly to Qin Guan with his open mouth and large front teeth, "Young man, where are you going?"

The Saviour! Qin guan asked him immediately, "How can I get to the Manyoufu Garage?"

"Is that the one of Siyuanqiao Market for Automobile

Accessories?”

Qin Guan nodded, “Exactly.” The uncle made a gesture of “five” to him, “I’ll send you there for five yuan.”

Qin Guan pressed two of his fingers down, “Three yuan, we go immediately.”

The uncle was surprised, “You know the business. Fine, get on my tricycle.”

# Chapter 46: The Automobile Accessories Market

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Qin Guan got on the backseat of the tricycle proudly. I'm familiar with the prices at the time.

The tricycle dashed forward on the unsurfaced road, leaving a yellow smoke behind.

When he arrived, Qin Guan understood why Sister Xue had not answered his call. The place was quite far from the centre of city, with no direct bus line. Half the site of the market was still under construction.

The man hosting the car exhibition had bought a bunch of new cars and organized the event to promote himself.

The market was also supporting his effort, because the place was indeed remote for residents of the capital.

Qin Guan did not remember the place himself until he had reached his destination. When it was completed, the Siyuanqiao Market for Automobile Accessories would become one of the largest markets for automobile accessories in Beijing. At 26,000 square meters, the market would contain more than 500 powerful business units.

The owner of Manyoufu Garage was quite a cunning man.

After changing clothes in the office, Qin Guan was appointed by the staff to a white Jetta car.

Wearing a black waistcoat, a white shirt, pants and bow tie, Qin Guan looked like a waiter in a western restaurant.

The assistant of the garage thanked him for his understanding. The suit had been borrowed by his wife from a hotel.

The exhibition was outdoors, and a poster of the garage was hanging in the back. Two Jettas, three Santanas and a Skoda were being exhibited. These were the most popular car types in 1999 in the capital.

There was a model standing next to each of the six cars. They all had young, rustic faces and took complicated poses as they stood by their appointed car with pride.

Sister Xue covered her face. I can't believe I picked such a job for Qin Guan.

Although right now he is just an untrained model, he is a beloved student of Professor Li and the only model I work for. With such an outstanding figure and appearance, he can't be seen with such low-level models. Sister Xue felt sick as her imagination ran wild.

She picked up her bag and waved Qin Guan over, "We can't stay here. It was a mistake. These models are too low-level to be seen with you," she said urgently.

Qin Guan stopped her as she was about to leave. He smiled and said, “You have taught me that, no matter the situation, a good model should always withstand the pressure and finish his designed work, as set by the employer.”

“But...”

“I know you’re thinking for me, but I think this is nothing. The cars are pretty good. Although they’re family cars, they’re good quality. If the products are good, that’s enough for me. Just don't ask me to promote anything outrageous.”

He made a comforting gesture at Sister Xue and returned to his car to wait for the opening ceremony.

Except for Qin Guan, who had been introduced by his independent agent, all the other models had come from the same small agency.

The owner of Manyoufu Garage had selected them for their low price.

The difference between the models was 1,500 yuan versus 200 yuan.

Sister Xue had mixed feelings, but the bald owner recognized Qin Guan at first glance. He’s definitely worth the money. The owner called his assistant over and murmured something to him.

The assistant nodded, ran to the Skoda, and said something to the model standing there before he pulled him to Qin Guan's car.

Pointing at the champagne-colored Skoda, he told Qin Guan, "My boss thinks it's more suitable for you. There, the champagne one. You can be in charge of it."

Qin Guan nodded in agreement before he went to stand by the car. The owner was quite pleased with the effect.

He was indeed a noble-looking young man. His colouring looked very attractive among the red, white and black cars.

Sure enough, not long after the exhibition had opened, customers in the market discovered it, undoubtedly attracted by Qin Guan.

They had seen what looked like a top show model leaning against a strange champagne-colored car. The brand of the car was also new to them. Skoda was a newcomer to the capital.

They gathered around to look at the car, asking the price and applying for a test drive. Qin Guan's salesmen were the busiest. The other salesmen were so envious, they wished Qin Guan was their model.

The boss was really happy with the result. He touched his bald head as he thought, What did the Skoda agency say exactly? How

much will they pay me for one order? My head has not been working so well after I went bald.

After standing there the whole morning, Qin Guan's leg began to cramp.

I can't rest while I'm surrounded by an audience. My cheeks are stiff from smiling. Making money is hard.

Sister Xue was massaging his shanks. She was a professional masseuse, able to relieve any tense muscles. Sister Xue had been quite busy those days. She had gotten a certificate in professional health care.

Lunch had been prepared in a large canteen cauldron. It was the garage's treat. There wasn't a lunch box nearby, but the assistant had bought dishes from the small restaurant at the entrance of the market.

One box of rice for each person. They also used foam plastic boxes.

The models sat in a circle as the assistant opened the boxes one by one.

Qin Guan poked his head in to find that the dishes were quite good. There were mushrooms fried with oilseed, double-cooked pork slices, diced chicken with bean sauce, fish-flavoured pork slices, minced meat with vermicelli, homemade bean curd, and

vinegar-pepper soup. A six dish combo with soup was quite a good meal.

Qin Guan shifted to eating mode while the other models, their agent, and Sister Xue looked on.

He was just like a Nanfu battery, six times more powerful than the others. He looked like a little hog eating happily in front of its crib.

The other models were astonished. Despite the fact that they were not professional models, they still watched their figure.

They might not have a specific diet, but gormandizing was definitely out of the question.

Their agent looked confused. Sister Xue smiled at them awkwardly before she buried her head inside a box.

In the afternoon, the exhibition took on a weird atmosphere. The other models were looking at Qin Guan reverently. Qin Guan had no idea why. He thought this was the weariest job he had done so far.

He had to pay attention to how he looked because of the passing customers.

Several female customers looked at him wantonly, making him feel threatened. He felt like a small, helpless pig ready for



slaughter.

Feeling sick, Qin Guan took a break from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., when most customers had left the remote location of the market.

The owner of the garage waved to the two agents in satisfaction. The exhibition could be wrapped up now.

## Chapter 47: The Contract Plan

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Qin Guan was exhausted both physically and mentally. He slumped down on the backseat of Sister Xue's car, closing his eyes to rest his mind.

Sister Xue gave Qin Guan mental guidance lessons while she drove, "This is common for models. Since you've decided to engage in modeling, you have to act professionally. If you're asked to do a naked photoshoot, what will you do?"

Qin Guan jumped up at this. His head hit the roof of the car, and he cried out and slumped back down.

Massaging the lump on his head, he mumbled, "I'll refuse. You can say no to things like that, Sister Xue."

Sister Xue was exasperated. Qin Guan was not living up to her expectations. "Even if you get to perform on a T show for a top designer? Even if you're representing a famous brand? Even if you've been invited by the most renowned fashion magazine in the world? Will you still say no?"

Qin Guan lay back on his seat and laughed. "Stop dreaming, Sister Xue. Neither riches nor honors will lead me astray. Neither poverty nor humbleness can make me deny my principles. I, Qin Guan, would rather have my head broken than take off my clothes."

Sister Xue sneered from the driver's seat, "You brave man.

Givenchy models earn six million dollars annually. It just so happens that the suit you wore for your first exhibition was Givenchy.”

Qin Guan was silent for such a long time that Sister Xue thought he had fallen asleep.

Suddenly, his voice sounded from the backseat, “Well, can I at least keep my underwear on?”

Sister Xue burst into laughter. You are considering the possibility.

“Of course not. First, they will pay no attention to your poor sense of shame, and second, it would be hard for you to even get the chance. Asian models are not very competitive. Plus, you are a male model. I already feel sorry for you.”

Qin Guan, on the other side, was filled with a fighting will. “You never know if you don’t try. Sister Xue, I have decided to sign a contract with you so you don’t starve.”

The car had just arrived at the entrance of the university. Sister Xue stopped, lit a cigarette and blew a smoke ring at Qin Guan. “Thank you for your mercy, Master Qin. What Professor Li and I told you meant nothing to you. You just made the decision because I told you about the six million dollars.”

Qin Guan lowered his head in shame. He pushed the door open to

get out before he turned around and said, “Have the contract ready the next time I go to Professor Li's. Please, I need your support in the future.”

Sister Xue shook her head helplessly. Suddenly, she thought of something. She smirked slightly and drove away.

Qin Guan lay in his bed for a long time as his roommates returned one by one.

Mu Lejiang dragged him out of his bed. Lying on Qin Guan's bed, he called Ayimina as usual.

Qin Guan was hurt deeply. He pulled up his colourful underwear, which Mu Lejiang had pulled down, and poured his heart out to Wang Lei angrily.

“Look at that guy. He's on the phone for more than an hour every day. It's a waste of resources. Their colleges are not that far from each other. Why don't they meet and have dinner instead?”

Wang Lei was reading a book. He cast a supercilious look over his glasses as he answered, “Speak out if you're jealous. I won't laugh at you.”

Qin Guan's mouth dropped open. “Cong Nianwei and I never made such long calls. On the weekend, she always goes to the library. We've been a couple for almost half a year now, but all I can do is hold her hand.”

Qin Guan got more and more gloomy. Suddenly, the door was pushed open hard, and their eldest brother rushed into the dormitory. He saw a nearly-naked Qin Guan, with a lonely pair of underwear hanging from his hips.

Pointing at Qin Guan, Ye Dong said, “Don’t dress like that in broad daylight. It's harmful to society's morals.”

Then he took a waistcoat from Qin Guan's bed and threw it at him. “Put it on at once. It’s not nice to appear like that before girls.”

Qin Guan was just putting on the waistcoat when the door was pushed open again and several girls entered.

They all watched the sexy scene. A boy with a good figure was facing away from them as he put on a black waistcoat. His shaped back and smooth waistline made them lick their lips.

Qin Guan got dressed properly and turned around. The girls shouted in low, surprised voices, “Qin Guan!”

“Actually, Qin Guan lives in this dormitory.”

“Who is Qin Guan?”

“Don't you know him? He’s the renowned school hunk of our

university.”

They kept talking while they scanned Qin Guan from head to toe.

The close-fitting cotton black waistcoat outlined Qin Guan's chest and abdomen. Of course, they automatically missed his bright green underwear.

Suddenly, Yang Jing entered the room and told the girls, “Why are you standing? Sit wherever you like.” It was she and Ye Dong that had brought them.

Mu Lejiang couldn't lie on the bed anymore. He said something to Ayimina and hung up the phone in a rush.

The girls were in the same dormitory as Yang Jing. Ye Dong had invited them to have dinner and dance at the college ball.

Li Jie was glad because he was the best dancer among his roommates. Although Qin Guan is widely accepted as the most handsome guy in our dormitory, I'm the Prince of the Ball.

Li Jie was quite good at social dancing. Besides the standard waltz, he also knew a little cha-cha and rumba. He was renowned in the small balls of the Capital University of Finance and Economics.

They waited until Liu Xiaoyang returned before they headed out of campus in a formidable formation to have dinner.

There was a family-run Sichuan restaurant across the road, so they decided to try it. They occupied the largest table at the corner of the restaurant.

Before the girls could say anything, the boys gave a long list of dishes, including fish filets in hot chili sauce, Chongqing style boiled blood curd, stewed bean curd with minced pork and pepper sauce, dry-fried green beans, and many others.

When the dishes had all been served, their behaviour got even worse. Except for Yang Jing, all the other girls had forgotten all about eating. They just watched the noisy boys around the table, who were quarrelling with each other and fighting heatedly over food.

Qin Guan, who was usually very dapper, had rolled his sleeves up. For fear that soup would drip on his shirt, he had left the buttons on his chest unfastened. With one foot planted on his chair, he bent down to grab some food.

It was true that distance made the heart grow fonder.

The girls' rosy image of Qin Guan was smashed by reality in an instant.

The dinner had disappointed them. They were cherishing the memory of withered love as they watched the boys, their spirits dropping really low.

When they finally finished dinner and got to the ball, the first song had already been played.

The girls were sitting together in groups of two or three. Any boy wanting to dance had to go up to them and ask them.



## Chapter 48: The Prince Of The Ball

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Li Jie deserved the title of the Prince of the Ball. No more than five minutes into the ball, several girls had already come over to ask him to lead them. Li Jie smoothed his hair proudly and accompanied the most beautiful girl among them to the dancing floor.

Ye Dong and Yang Jing held hands as they got on the dancing floor. Liu Xiaoyang was sitting aside watching everybody else.

Mu Lejiang was in love with a girl, and Wang Lei wasn't interested in dancing, so the two of them sat together and drank beer.

Qin Guan had been left alone before one of the girls from their company came up to him. "Do you want to dance?"

Qin Guan shook his head as he answered, "I'll just watch for a while."

The disappointed girl returned to her friends, and they all talked secretly together. "Is Qin Guan incapable of dancing?"

"Is that true? That would be disappointing. His reputation would be harmed."

"Sure!"

What was Qin Guan doing at the time?

He was observing the dancers.

He found that all the dancers, not just the neophytes learning to dance socially, but also the older ones who had been attending balls for a long time, were terrible at dancing. Only Li Jie looked quite good at it.

Li Jin finished a song and stepped out, drenched in sweat.

He grabbed Qin Guan's beer to have a sip and asked, "Why aren't you dancing? Don't tell me you can't. Look at the girls, they're practically burning you with their eyes."

Qin Guan smiled and patted Li Jie. "I'm afraid of robbing you of your title as Prince of the Ball. We're in the same dormitory and you call me a second brother. I would never want to harm your reputation."

Li Jie was not convinced by his explanation. Setting the beer on the table, he said, "You're all talk. Come on, baby!"

Are you walking your dog or something? Qin Guan looked at Li Jie speechlessly as he stood up. "I hope you won't regret what you said."

Qin Guan arranged his shirt, pulled down his sleeves and fastened his buttons. He walked up to the girl who had just invited

him, made a gesture fitting to a gentleman, and said softly, “Hello, can I have the honour of dancing with you?”

All the girls seemed to get excited by his words. They stared at the girl who had been invited with a jealous expression in their eyes.

The astonished girl was pushed forward by her friends. “Wake up. Answer him!”

She finally returned to reality and answered timidly, “Oh, of course.”

Qin Guan smiled and took her hand as he escorted her to the dance floor. The person in charge realized that someone popular was coming. Other people stopped dancing to make way for him, and the DJ shouted at Qin Guan, “Hey dude, what kind of song do you want?”

Qin Guan looked down and asked his partner, “What are you good at?”

The girl answered with confidence, “The waltz.”

Qin Guan was stupefied for a moment before he said, “Okay, the waltz it is.”

The girl looked very excited. I shouldn’t have doubted my Prince Charming. He is still perfect, despite his rude behavior at dinner.

All the others are dancing randomly, but my Prince Charming knows the waltz. He is perfect for me.

Qin Guan thought it was lucky that he had been studying with Professor Li and had learned so much about the body. Dancing was actually one of the best ways to promote grace in models.

He had learned a lot about dancing, and the waltz was among those things.

“Can you play the waltz?” he asked the DJ.

The DJ signed that it was okay. “No problem.”

“Blue Danube” started playing slowly. Qin Guan and his partner were poised to begin.

Forward, sideways, and a close step. That was the basic pattern of the dance.

The two of them began their dance with a perfect round.

Li Jie sprinkled a mouthful of beer beside the dancing floor.

F\*ck! Qin Guan is so busy with courses and part-time jobs. When the hell does he have the time to practice dancing?

The couple was only getting better and better.

Qin Guan wore straight, western style pants and a white hollowed-out shirt. If his partner had been in a long dress, it would have been the perfect waltz atmosphere.

The tacit partners continued to turn. Suddenly, Qin Guan twirled his partner around in the spirit of the waltz. They circled around without turning.

One, two, three... the twirling movement included three steps. The onlookers held their breath before their excellent performance.

Finally, they stopped as the music suddenly came to an end. It was just like the darkness before dawn. Silence dominated the whole room. The two of them looked at each other, breathing heavily. Dancing was intense physical exercise.

Li Jie was shaking as if he had been shocked by electricity.

Liu Xiaoyang was hopeless at dancing, but he had felt the beauty, and he cheered for his idol in blind worship, "Wonderful!"

His shout woke everyone up, an enthusiastic applause echoing around the ballroom.

Qin Guan and his partner answered the curtain call and retreated with leisure.

Qin Guan sat down by the table. Before he could take a sip of beer, Li Jie pulled him close. “My brother, your dancing is excellent. Teach me, please!”

Qin Guan answered without mercy, “I have no time.”

Li Jie got angry before Qin Guan continued, “If you are really interested in learning, I could introduce you to a professional teacher.”

Li Jie’s expression changed at once. “It would be my honor. Thank you, my brother.”

The girls looked at Qin Guan eagerly, like flies around a piece of pork.

His partner had already returned to her friends, who were discussing Qin Guan heatedly.

“I know, his body is so...”

“Hear, hear...”

The girls looked thirsty for details as his silly dance partner burst into laughter.

They all shouted, “Stop laughing! Go on!”

“Yes, we’re dying of curiosity!”

# Chapter 49: Love Rival

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Covering her mouth, the girl smiled. “His figure is excellent. He is both tall and handsome. He really is a strong man.”

“Wow!”

The girls began to talk while they looked at Qin Guan eagerly. We’re still fans of yours. Who said that our prince couldn't dance? Come out. We promise not to beat you to death.

Qin Guan got quite famous overnight, giving life to countless legends at the university ball.

Some people insisted that he had been the first universally accepted dancing god in the whole university, others claimed that there had been countless dancing girls worshipping him, and some people believed that Qin Guan was paranormally powerful.

That night, he earned a new title, that of the “Childe of the Ball”. He was also holding two more titles, “the straight-A boy from the Accounting Department” and “the most handsome freshman”.

Qin Guan had no idea about the gossip. It was true that the person involved was always the last one to hear the rumours circulating about them.

At the time, he was pretending to be a QH University student so he could share a class with Cong Nianwei.



The class was about indoor design.

Cong Nianwei hit him under the desk and asked in low voice, “Why are you here?”

Qin Guan was innocent. He covered his head with a book as he answered, “It has been a long time since I last saw you. I’ve been missing you a lot.”

He held her hand and closed his eyes as he lay down on the desk. “Listen to the professor. I won't bother you.”

Cong Nianwei tried to pull her hand out, but failed. She could do nothing but look ahead and pay attention.

Had this been after the year 2000, an article would have been posted on the Tianya Forum, titled “What can I do about my clingy boyfriend?”

Faced with Qin Guan's shameless smile, Cong Nianwei just listened to the professor helplessly. Her best friends looked surprised.

What was going on with Cong Nianwei, the most popular and talented girl in the department and the beauty of QH University in both Science and Technology? She was showing off her relationship before her classmates!

Everyone was talking heatedly in low voices.

Chi Hailin, who was sitting in the front row, overheard someone talking about Cong Nianwei and turned around to have a look. Suddenly, he did a double take. Fuck! Are my eyes fooling me? Is that Qin Guan smiling like silly? He dares show up in our class? Unbelievable! He has gone too far in bullying me!

He tore down a blank page from his notebook, wrote something on it, rolled it into a ball and threw it at Qin Guan.

Qin Guan was lying on the desk smiling when a spit ball hit him on the head.

He spread it open and read, "What are you doing here? This is QH University."

Qin Guan smiled again. At the time, he had nothing to do, so he picked up a pen from Cong Nianwei's pencil case and wrote, "My girlfriend is here, you know."

He rolled the ball again and threw it back.

Chi Hailin looked quite angry at his words. He replied, "This is my turf."

Qin Guan wrote back, "I'm risking my life, daring to challenge the emperor."

The ball came and went fast. Cong Nianwei couldn't stand their childishness. She pulled her chair a little further away without Qin Guan noticing. He was too happy playing.

It was hard to aim with a flying ball. Qin Guan turned around and played his trump card.

He tore another blank page, blew his nose on it and threw it back at Chi Hailin.

Chi Hailin was suspecting why the ball had taken so long to fly back to him.

When it landed on his desk, he opened it excitedly, and the paper stuck to his hand.

Chi Hailin cried out and stood up.

Qin Guan was laughing secretly in the back row, covering his mouth.

Chi Hailin stood up angrily with snot on his hand. He turned around and shouted loudly, "Qin Guan, I will fight you!"

The angry young man had forgotten that he was in a crowded classroom. The professor and all the students turned their eyes on him.

A soft voice sounded from behind him, “I don't care who you want to fight with. You shouted in the middle of my class, so somebody will indeed fight you. Step outside.”

Hands clasped behind his back, the designing class professor led Chi Hailin out of the classroom.

Chi Hailin was so depressed that he forgot to wipe the snot off his hand.

Crossing his legs, Qin Guan enjoyed his success.

The professor suddenly appeared in front of him, his hands still behind his back. “You’re not attending my class, boy. Step outside.”

Qin Guan stopped smiling and left his seat with a pout. As he walked to the front row, he blew Cong Nianwei a kiss and ran out of the classroom before anyone could react.

The classroom erupted in whispers.

Cong Nianwei pretended to be calm. I have no idea what’s going on.

The professor restored the order, but Cong Nianwei could still hear conversations going on around her.

“Who is he? I have never met him before.”

“Maybe he’s from another college.”

“If he was from our university, I’d know him. He's so much more handsome from the guys in our class.”

“Who did he blow that kiss at? It was in my direction.”

That particular student was thinking too much. Plus, it was a guy.

Chi Hailin followed Qin Guan as soon as he was kicked out of the classroom. Qin Guan burst into laughter when he saw him. “Sorry, I can't help it.”

Chi Hailin was quite angry. Why did he have to keep running into that idiot? Helplessly, he told Qin Guan, “Shall we be nicer to each other?”

Qin Guan spread his hands. “Why do I have to be nice to someone who hasn’t been nice to me? Besides, you were too worked up to handle the situation.”

Chi Hailin stretched out his snot-covered hand. “Are you afraid of destroying your image?”

Qin Guan grinned. “We both know I only care about Cong Nianwei. Boy, you must be strong-willed. You’re so young.”

Chi Hailin nearly cried of embarrassment. He ran away with his books, shouting loudly, “I’ll reveal your true colors to Cong Nianwei. You just wait and see!”

Qin Guan was much taller and stronger than him. Chi Hailin was afraid that he would beat him up for threatening him, so he put some distance between them, just to be on the safe side.

Cong Nianwei, who had just finished her class, took in the scene before her.

She poked Qin Guan with her books in front of all her classmates.

Qin Guan smirked delightfully, taking a cool pose as he asked, “What’s the matter? Is your class over? Shall we go window-shopping or maybe watch a movie?”

He was really jealous of his two roommates and their girlfriends.

## Chapter 50: Zhongguancun In 1999

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The others have been with their girlfriends all day long, while I haven't seen mine in two months.

Embarrassed, Cong Nianwei added a stab to Qin Guan's heart, "I have another class later. I plan to apply for a double degree in my sophomore year. I have to take the city design class in advance in the afternoon. I'm sorry, Qin Guan."

Suddenly, tears filled Qin Guan's eyes. He looked like a wet dog.

The passing students saw a gloomy, tall handsome man crying because of Cong Nianwei.

Cong Nianwei kicked Qin Guan. "Stop pretending! I know you well. I'll buy you a cup of milk tea. Now go home!"

She went to the water bar downstairs, bought a cup of pearl milk tea and handed it over to Qin Guan. Waving her hands, she shooed Qin Guan away like a small dog.

The scene made her classmates feel intimidated. How powerful the Queen is! We have to worship her! She just drove away such a handsome boy. She is so strong!

From then on, Cong Nianwei became famous in the Department of Architecture at QH University, her tough reputation protecting her from many a nasty pursuer.

Hanging his head down, Qin Guan walked out of the campus. I failed once again in dating her. Next week, I'll sign the contract and meet with the director of the agency. Sister Xue has accepted several small jobs, and I have to tutor Huang Jiajia. Qin Guan would be very busy.

It will be a long time before I see her again. Qin Guan felt wronged while he rode the bus. There was a traffic jam at Zhongguancun.

Since he had nothing to do in the afternoon, idling at Zhongguancun sounded like the best choice.

The bus arrived at the stop with difficulty, and Qin Guan got off immediately. The main entrance of the electronics building reminded him of something from his past life.

In his memory, Zhongguancun had grown just within a couple of years, the prices becoming fixed for all electronics stores in the capital.

When Qin Guan had been in college in his past life, he'd had no idea about the high-tech electronics market. However, he had known about the battle of the memory bank that had taken place between 1999 and 2000.

Nobody had known which shop or supplier had started the battle. It was impossible to narrow down the scope to one group or store.



In June 1999, without any prior warning, the battle of the memory bank had started.

In quite a short time, 128M memory banks were totally sold out at all retailing stores at the Zhongguancun business district.

The stocks had run out at all stores that assembled computers or retailed electronic accessories.

As a result, a small-scale panic had spread through the stores at Zhongguancun like the flu. People had tried to replenish their stock using all kinds of crazy methods.

There had been no 128M memory banks, while 256M and 512M memory banks had still been in stock. Prices had begun rising instantly, from the original price of 80 yuan to more than 200 yuan. The price had been tripled in only a few days.

The sellers at Zhongguancun had gone crazy. They started stocking the memory banks, anticipating to make more money by selling them at a higher price.

Smaller merchants lost their business as customers did not wish to pay a bubble price.

The trading volume suddenly dropped by 30%.

Then one day, while the prices had still been surging, a large amount of memory banks entered the market, and the prices began to fall in refluent waves.

One day, the price for the 128M memory bank had been 248 yuan, while on the next one it was 201 yuan. On the third day, it was 122 yuan, and on the fourth day, it was 79 yuan, which was even lower than the original price.

The whole market had gone mad. A depressing atmosphere had taken over Zhongguancun. The retail investors with stock had been hurt badly, and plenty of middlemen couldn't sell out their stock.

The tall building had collapsed in one moment. Some people had closed their stores, while others had gone bankrupt. Amid the storm, many people had lost everything.

In Qin Guan's past life, one of his roommates had told him the story.

A computer fanatic that Qin Guan had met through work had also confirmed it.

Qin Guan looked down at his mobile phone subconsciously. On the screen, it stated that it was late May 1999. There were several days left before the memory bank battle.

Qin Guan hesitated.

Since his rebirth, he had neither recalled his past life, nor tried to change other people's lives. He had avoided plagiarizing, copying, making fast money or stealing other people's achievements.

Like a small butterfly, I haven't raised any storms. Is this the original world I used to inhabit, though? Will there be a battle of memory banks this time, too? Or would it be in vain if I tried to stock memory banks?

Qin Guan was in a dilemma when a woman in a flowery shawl jumped out of a corner with a baby in her arms, and told him in low voice, "Young man, you must be a green hand. You have been standing here for so long. You dare not ask directly, right?"

She pulled Qin Guan over and continued to speak kindly, "I'm warm-hearted, but you can't buy anything from the entrance. You want those disks, don't you? Just follow me."

She had mistaken Qin Guan for someone who wanted to buy special disks.

Qin Guan decided to follow her and have a look.

They crossed Zhongguancun street to the small roads at the back, where a two-floor building with a shabby wooden sign was located. On the white sign there were several black characters stating that it was a business building.

The woman waved at Qin Guan, gesturing for him to come closer. They entered the building, despite the fact that it looked like it was about to collapse.

Although it was broad daylight, it was dark inside. There were rows of small yellow doors without door plates or numbers.

Several furtive people would come out of the doors, confirming that it wasn't a haunted building.

The woman led Qin Guan down a corridor on the left with familiarity. They didn't stop until they reached the door at the end of it.

The woman pushed the screeching door open to reveal a whole new world. Actually, it was like a noisy vegetable market inside.

There was a large room filled with shelves, and in the middle of it there was a large pile of disks.

The woman pulled Qin Guan into the room, patted the arm of a young man who was arranging some disks, and pointed at Qin Guan. "This is my customer. Write it down on the record for me."

The young man took a notebook and a pen out of the pocket of his apron. The woman found her page and signed as Sun Erhua. She returned both the notebook and the pen to the young man, warning him, "Don't make any mistakes!"

Then she cast a smile at Qin Guan and went out with her baby to find more customers.

The young man didn't plan on assisting Qin Guan. Pointing to the shelves, he said, "Game disks are on the left, office software is on the right. TV series and films are at the bottom. You can look for any disks you're interested in."

# Chapter 51: The Special Disk

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Qin Guan nodded. It was a busy business. There were quite a few people around the shelves, standing or squatting down on the floor.

The young man was too busy counting the disks to help Qin Guan.

Qin Guan had to depend on himself. Squatting down on the floor, he pushed lightly through the pile of disks containing popular TV series and films of the time.

There were films like “A Wicked Ghost”, “The Emperor and the Assassin”, “Sorry, Baby”, and so on.

Among the TV series were “Man's Best Friend”, “Witness to a Prosecution”, “White-Haired Heroine”, etc. I have watched these in my past life. They're bringing back memories of the old days.

Qin Guan selected several disks and pulled over a red plastic bag from a shelf nearby. He put them in the bag and turned to the shelf on the left to look at the video games.

There were lots of games there. “Age of Empires”, “Railroad Tycoon II”, “Taikou Risshiden III”, etc.

Qin Guan picked several disks up and threw them inside the bag. Liu Xiaoyang will be delighted to get them as a gift.

Finally, he took a CD titled “Xianglong Financial Software” from the shelf on the right. There were ten disks all in all.

Qin Guan handed the bag to the young man. Looking around, he asked him in a low voice, “Hey, dude. Where are the special disks?”

The young man looked up in understanding. He looked around again before pulling Qin Guan to the most secluded corner of the room.

There was a giant travelling bag there that could be carried away easily. All the special disks were inside.

Rubbing his hands, the young man asked slyly, “Who do you want?”

Qin Guan was surprised. He answered with a question, “Who do you have?”

The young man realized he was a green hand, and shared his experience with Qin Guan proudly, “There are both veteran and new stars here. Who would you like?” Then he went on to list Japanese adult movie actresses. Qin Guan was confused. He wasn't familiar with those girls at all. “Who would you recommend?” he asked modestly.

The young man raised his head and patted his chest proudly. “Okay, I’ll choose for you. How many do you want?” Qin Guan

lifted two fingers. “I’ll try a couple first. If they're good, then I’ll come back for more.”

With the same understanding expression in his eyes, the young man patted Qin Guan on the shoulder. “You must have bought CDs titled ‘An Encounter in the Wild Field’, only to find that it's ‘Animal World’ when you return home. Those sellers are f\*cking cheaters. We are honest businessmen, we don't like men like that. Since you trust me, I’ll help you choose. They'll be excellent.”

Qin Guan nodded. The young man took two disks out of the bag with ease, sheathed them in white-paper shells, and threw them into Qin Guan's bag. Qin Guan paid him 60 yuan.

It was no wonder that piracy was flourishing in 1999. The internet wasn’t widespread yet, and this was much cheaper than buying hundred-yuan video games and thousand-yuan office software.

The young man filled in the number “12” at the column where Sun Erhua had signed. The deal was made.

Qin Guan walked outside the building, feeling very pleased with himself. Suddenly, he remembered what he had planned on doing at Zhongguancun in the first place.

He found himself in a dilemma once again. Shall I buy the memory banks or not? It's no pain, no gain after all!



It was said that people would go as far as to commit murder for double profit. Plus, this would be 300% profit.

Thinking of this, Qin Guan quickly entered the bank beside Zhongguancun Center and withdrew 8,000 yuan.

That was most of his income from his part-time job. Taking a long breath, Qin Guan then entered the Zhongguancun Center and took the escalator to the third floor of the building.

There were several small counters there, each of them a small shop. Many people had started their businesses by sharing a counter with other partners there.

There were plenty of customers and sellers. Qin Guan did not stand out among them.

He walked to a counter at the far corner of the third floor. Behind the counter, there was a handwritten sign reading, "Motherboards and memory banks on sale."

Qin Guan knocked on the counter and asked the boss, "How much is the 128M memory bank?" "

The man behind the counter looked up and answered plainly, "85 yuan each."

Qin Guan was unsatisfied with the price. Shaking his head, he said, "I'm not a retail customer. I know the market here. Twenty

sticks, 79 yuan each. Is that okay?”

Qin Guan had the man's attention now. Whoops. The boy might be young, but he sure is familiar with the market. Still, he insisted on his original price.

Then he thought it over and shook his head again, “No, the price today is 80 yuan. No more bargaining.”

Qin Guan looked around and said in low voice, “To be honest, dude, twenty sticks from your shop are not enough to satisfy my demand.”

The man looked excited. He moved closer to Qin Guan and asked in low voice, “How many do you want? Tell me. I can get them from other shops for you.”

Qin Guan lifted one finger carefully. “One hundred for that price.”

The man knocked on the counter. “Deal.” Then he took out a folding chair for Qin Guan. “Sit down for a bit. I’ll go check my stock.”

Qin Guan put the chair down and went to buy a bottle of water from the resting area. When he returned, he found the man with a bag of parts on the counter.

While he was drinking, the man finished counting. There were

only 33 sticks. He was 67 sticks short. The man told Qin Guan to wait a while and manage the counter for him while he went to get the sticks from other shops.

He ran to the shop in front and talked with the young man behind the counter, who gave him two memory banks.

The man took them and moved on to the next shop. When Qin Guan was half-way through his bottle of mineral water, the man returned with a bag full of memory banks.

He piled them all in his hand on the counter and counted, "... ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred exactly!"

Qin Guan was straightforward with him. "I will not open the packages, but I've got to ask. How did the others find new products just like that? How can I know that the quality is good?"

The man smiled. "You are so weird. Such a big number of memory banks will be either for stock or for sale. Or will you just keep them at home? If you plan on selling them later on, the outer package will have to be intact. The seniors in our circle can guarantee that they're new products. There are no scratches on them. They're experienced, don't worry."

Qin Guan felt relieved. He kept one of the bills and handed over the rest to the man. "7,900 yuan. Count them."

Beaming, the man counted the bills. Then he took out a currency

detector from a corner and counted them again.

Finally, he straightened up and said, “No problem, take them. Come back anytime.” He gave Qin Guan a business card.

Qin Guan took the bag and the card, nodded at the man, and left Zhongguancun.

## Chapter 52: Watching A Movie Together

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As the boss saw him with so many memory banks, his eyes narrowed. It's suspicious. He does not look like a businessman at first glance. Why did he buy such a big pile of memory banks? Considering his style, the boy cannot be an internet café runner. Is he perhaps the son of some businessman who's gotten some information from his parents? Does he want to earn a little money by investing his pocket money? No, I'm wrong. If his father was a businessman, he wouldn't need to shop here. All he would need to do was make a call. That's not it. What if the boy overheard the information and doesn't want anyone know?

In the blink of an eye, the man imagined several scenarios of turmoil in the market and many exciting stories involving rich, powerful families.

He was inspired. There must be some kind of incident related to the 128M memory bank! The boy was stocking up! What should I do? Memory banks, that's it! The man hit his own head. F\*ck! I've cleared my stock! I have to stock up right now.

Without delay, he stood up and headed for the other shops.

The wings of a small butterfly had flapped, yet Qin Guan knew nothing about it.

He was currently on the bus. This time the situation is different from the factory stocks. I will lose my money if the price of the memory banks drops. My uncle and mother might benefit from

their leaders' guilt, but if the memory bank price remains the same, my deposit will be lost.

As he thought of this, Qin Guan buried his face in his hands in sadness.

I'm not a hero destined for great things. Others can dominate Wall Street, win the lottery or conquer the entertainment world, but I'm swayed by considering the gain and loss of a deal less worth than 8,000 yuan.

Luo Yuan felt depressed as the bus arrived at the stop. As he got off the bus though, his bad mood improved. Things will eventually sort themselves out. I can always make the money again if I lose it. Anyhow, June is approaching, so I will find out soon enough. Pleased with himself, Luo Yuan threw the bag in his closet and took out the pirated disks.

His roommates gathered around. Liu Xiaoyang was the most excited. "I have long wanted to buy these games!" he shouted. "How much for one disk? If I remember right, they must cost 275 yuan each."

Qin Guan answered calmly, "You're wrong. It's five yuan each."

Liu Xiaoyang jumped up with a cry, "What? Motherf\*cker! That seller cheated me!"

Speechlessly, Qin Guan pointed at the coarse, misty cover of the

disk. “It's pirated. Just making it clear before you get excited.”

Wang Lei looked at them one by one. They're all popular movies and TV series. “Witness of A Prosecution” seems good. There's some financial software as well. Qin Guan is really intense. What are these two disks in the white cases?

Wang Lei took the disks out of the cases. There was nothing written on them.

He waved the disks in front of Qin Guan and asked, “Qin Guan, why did you buy these blank disks?”

Qin Guan was suddenly reminded of the smuggled goods. He put his arms on his hips proudly as he laughed, “Do you know what they are? It's a bonus for you guys.”

It was June, and the temperature was getting higher.

The doors to all the dormitories were open so the wind could flow, so even the tiniest news spread fast among all the students along the corridor.

Qin Guan laughed loudly and the students of the dormitory across from theirs ran over to take a look.

They saw the disks.

“So many new movies! Let’s watch them together!”

The news spread and all the idlers on the whole floor gathered there.

That was a common occurrence in dormitories. If there were any new movies, they would all gather and bring snacks.

Qin Guan was paralyzed by fear. “F\*ck! What should I do? This is significant. My clever brain has run out of ideas!”

Before he could figure out what to do, their room had already become packed with people. Qin Guan looked gloomy as he told Ye Dong in a low voice, “Don’t play the disk!”

Ye Dong was confused. Unconsciously, he lowered his voice as well, “Why?”

Wang Lei and Liu Xiaoyang moved their heads closer in curiosity. Grinding his teeth, Qin Guan explained, “That’s an AV of Ryoko Nagase.” “

Ye Dong screamed like his penis had been stamped, “Ryoko Nagase?”

All the boys suddenly fell silent, except Liu Xiaoyang, who kept asking around, “Who is Ryoko Nagase? Is it a rom-com or an action movie?”



Brother Liu, you're so innocent. I wonder if you just got your ID card yesterday.

Ye Dong's shout made Qin Guan sick. Am I guilty of circulating porn films? No more than two seconds later, people started bustling about.

“Stop talking rubbish! Play it right now!”

“I agree, play it! I love rom-coms!”

Ye Dong's shout had attracted countless students from other dormitories. There was a big commotion.

Not caring about anything, Qin Guan cried, “There are too many people! We don't have enough chairs! Let's leave it for today, we'll meet in our spare time!”

Everyone was so angry, they started shouting.

“What did you say, dude? You don't want to share? You just want to watch with your door shut? You're not loyal to your friends!”

“I agree! Good movies should be shared!”

“Is there no spirit of solidarity or friendship among fellow students?”

“I have the keys to the college playroom! Hundreds of people can fit there! There’s even a closed circuit television!” A member of the Youth League took a bunch of keys out of his pocket. Qin Guan stared at him in surprise. What the f\*ck!

Everyone applauded happily. Clustering around Qin Guan and his roommates, they took all the disks from the table for fear of missing something, and headed for the playroom in a formidable array.

As soon as they opened the door, they turned on the television and the DVD player.

Some of them waved to Qin Guan urgently, “Bring the disks, quick!”

Others reminded the people sitting by the windows, “It's too bright inside! It will affect the quality of the film. Shut the curtains!”

Dear fellow students, this not a rom-com or an action movie.

The curtains were closed and the chairs were placed in a circle. Everything was ready except for the disk. Ye Dong pulled the disk from Qin Guan's hand and placed it in the DVD player.

# Chapter 53: Hello Animal World, Farewell Animal World

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The disk began to turn around, and the blue background appeared on the TV screen. Everyone had quieted down, holding their breath as they waited for the images to start playing.

“It is mating season for animals in Africa, and the grassland is full of life...” the familiar voice of [Zhao Zhongxiang](#) was heard.

Then a male lion and three lionesses appeared on screen, making love.

There was silence before people suddenly exploded in laughter.

“What the hell is this?”

“Are you mad, Qin Guan? Is this your idea of a love-action film?”

“But there are lions mating. The commentator said that it was mating season.”

The sincere face of the young man emerged in Qin Guan's mind as he recalled his words. Qin Guan's innocent heart was hurt. Ye Dong clucked his mouth and took the disk out of the player to make space for the next one.

The television brightened again with a flash.

A Japanese girl with very little clothes appeared suddenly on the screen, saying sweetly to the camera, “Hello! It’s nice to meet you. I’m Ryoko Nagase. Please kindly advise.”

The boys shouted and sat back in their chairs, staring at the screen in concentration.

Ten minutes passed, twenty...

The girl was leading the audience to places where she had shot movies, and she was introducing her directors and male partners.

She wasn’t getting to the point though. She wore very little clothes, but she did not take them off. She was hot, but she was not naked.

They watched on until the film ended. Finally, the actress gave them a little something of what they had been thirsty for.

She groaned and touched herself for a while, but this was not what they really wanted to watch.

They all complained for a while. Qin Guan had earned the title of “pirated disk greenhand.”

However, Qin Guan let out a long breath of relief. Delicious food should be shared secretly. The room is filled with straight-A

students. Li Laoshi, the most honest student of the Finance Department, is sitting in the southern corner, and the violin virtuoso is sitting in the back row. How can top students with thick glasses behave like this? They're a group of polished scoundrels! I'm ashamed to be with them!

He had forgotten who was the leader of the group.

Downhearted, everyone was dismissed. Qin Guan put the disks away and returned to his dorm with his roommates. Liu Xiaoyang repeated his question once again, "What is a love-action movie?"

They all stared at him speechlessly before they answered together, "When you grow up, you'll find out."

There was no story overnight. Before they knew it, the weekend had arrived.

Led by Professor Li and Sister Xue, Qin Guan went to Balizhuang, where the most renowned and oldest model agency in China was located in the capital.

As early as November 1989, the company had held the first New Silk Road Chinese Model Competition, which was the first national model competition, thus building a solid foundation for model selection, cultivation and promotion for the future.

Its predecessor had been the China Fashion Art Performance Group, a subdivision of the China Clothing Cooperation. Professor

Li was actually one of its oldest members.

She led Qin Guan to the office of the Training Department with ease and knocked on the door. A voice sounded from behind it, “Come in, please.”

They pushed the door open and found a woman inside. The woman embraced Professor Li.

Sister Zhang had been a model in Professor Li’s time, but she had chosen to stay and work in the company. She was currently in charge of the New Silk Road Training School.

They sat down, and Professor Li briefly introduced Qin Guan to Sister Zhang, handing his resume and basic information to her.

Sister Zhang read the resume and scanned Qin Guan over carefully twice. She nodded in satisfaction before she said, “The boy is in a good physical condition, even better than most of our models. Are you interested in a full time job here?”

Sister Xue was anxious. I discovered Qin Guan first!

Professor Li gestured to Sister Xue, indicating for her to calm down, before she explained Qin Guan's situation to Sister Zhang.

Sister Zhang seemed disappointed. Spreading her hands out, she said, “Your requirement is a piece of cake. Let me explain though, little Xue. We have a standard contract for subordinated models

here. Qin Guan has no formal contract with any agency, so he must be an independent model, am I right?”

Xue Wanyi nodded honestly before Sister Zhang continued, “Once he’s attached to our company, he will be a member here. His class will be C, which is a signed model.”

Xue Wanyi nodded again, slightly inspired with enthusiasm.

Sister Zhang knocked twice on her desk with her pen. “Generally speaking, a model will suffer losses from a subordinating contract. Our resources will surely concentrate on our own models. You can only get some small jobs given up by other agents. So now we come to the most important question. What’s your goal in becoming a model, Qin Guan?”

Xue Wanyi hastened to gesture at Qin Guan, but he ignored her and told Sister Zhang happily, “To make money!”

Xue Wanyi covered her face. F\*ck!

Sister Zhang burst into laughter, “You are the most honest child I have met recently! C-level is not enough for you to make money though. I would suggest that you try some small competitions. With enough experience, you could even participate in our own competition.”

Xue Wanyi and Qin Guan exchanged a glance, listening to her suggestion with an open mind.

There was nothing left for Sister Zhang to say, so she just made a call, “Little Ma, bring two copies of subordinating contracts to my office.”

In less than five minutes, Little Ma knocked and came in with two contracts in hand.

Sister Xue read carefully about the duties and charges on both sides before signing.

Little Ma stamped the contract. From that moment on, the contract was officially in effect.

Striking while the iron was hot, Sister Xue took two more contracts out of her backpack and handed them to Qin Guan.

Zhao Zhongxiang: One of the most famous and eldest hosts in CCTV, who used to be the commentator of the CCTV’s documentary series “Animal World”.



# Chapter 54: Formal Contract

Qin Guan read the contract word by word.

Party A: Xue Wanyi

Party B:

On the basis of the principles of equality and mutual benefit, Party A and Party B have agreed on the following terms after a friendly negotiation:

1. Party A shall provide Party B with a publicity and promotion platform.

2. Party B shall voluntarily participate in the commercial performances, events, advertisements, and other activities organized by Party A.

3, Party B shall provide Party A with all necessary personal information, including personal photos. Personal information has to be provided voluntarily and be true, accurate and reliable. In case of a dispute caused by false information, Party B will bear all responsibility.

Party A: (Stamp) Party B : (Signature)

Date:

It was a simple contract with only 13 terms. Qin Guan went through it quickly, smiling at Sister Xue as he signed his name.

From that day on, Qin Guan was honorably promoted from an untrained model to a C-level model with a formal agency and an agent.

Sister Zhang stood up and walked around the desk, encouraging Xue Wanyi, “Since Qin Guan is now our model, he should get acquainted with our staff. He will have to communicate with them in the future.”

“I’ll take you to the Marketing Department today. In the future, they will share resources with you, besides the channels you find yourself. You have to cultivate a good relationship with them.”

Qin Guan and Sister Xue followed Professor Li and Sister Zhang out of her office and headed towards the Marketing Department.

Qin Guan was shocked by the noisy scene in the offices of the Marketing Department. People were answering phones, making posters and carrying costumes. It looked like a bazaar was taking place there.

Sister Zhang didn’t seem surprised. “Everyone is always super busy after the last date for competition applications. That's to be

expected.”

She led them to a group of staff who were making calls, where a gentle, middle-aged man sat.

She introduced the man, “This is Lan Jin, marketing director of New Silk Road. He is in charge of model promotion and agent services. He is a very powerful leader.”

Then she pointed to Xue Wanyi and Qin Guan and introduced them as well, “They are a new subordinated agent and model, a combination with great potential.”

The director scanned Qin Guan from head to toe in satisfaction before shouting loudly to his staff, “Ni Dalei, come here!”

A strong man stood up from the phones and ran over at his call. “I’m coming! What's the matter, sir?”

Lan Jin pointed at Xue Wanyi, “New subordinated agent. They’ll be in your group from now on.”

Ni Dalei looked gloomy. Subordinated agents are so hard to control. They know nothing, but they’re always really picky. They can't share the good resources of the company, and if the model does not qualify for ordinary resources, the customers are left unsatisfied.

In his opinion, subordinated models were of little value, but

unwilling to be cast away. They would share tiny jobs with their own models, but the handling charges weren't even enough to pay for a meal.

Thinking of this, Ni Dalei glanced at Sister Xue and Qin Quan furtively.

That glance changed his mind completely though.

Qin Guan was bound to attract attention as he stood there. Nothing could cover his charm. It didn't matter if he was among ordinary people or other shining models.

Ni Dalei reached for Xue Wanyi's hand at once and tried to persuade her, "What a handsome boy! How can you sign a subordinate contract for him? Where is your professional conscience?"

It was Xue Wanyi's turn to be gloomy now. Everyone who sees Qin Guan blames me!

She explained the situation again helplessly.

Ni Dalei felt pity for her. He considered Qin Guan really promising for participating in a work-study program and decided to select the best jobs for him.

In such a world, good appearances were the key to every door.

The morning passed without any trouble.

To celebrate her success, Sister Xue decided to treat Professor Li and Qin Guan. After all, the logo of the New Silk Road company would be printed on her business card from now on.

She drove everyone to the Agency of the Xinjiang Province in the capital, which was located on Sanlihe Road 7 in the Haidian District.

The Xinjiang style restaurant was inside the agency. With its delicious food, large portions, and reasonable prices, the restaurant was so popular that customers were always waiting to find a seat.

However, the dinning area in the noisy hall was mediocre. This was a common feature for most Xinjiang style restaurants.

It was suitable for collective dinner though, especially for meat-lovers.

They found a table at the innermost corner and asked the waiter to order.

Sister Xue was a frequent patron at the restaurant. She ordered without any hesitation as Qin Guan observed the restaurant.

It looked ordinary, just like a college cafeteria. The tables and chairs were in disarray, and the window for staple food was outdoors. Customers could just grab a plate and help themselves.

The dishes were served quickly. A giant plate of meat packaged in crusty pancakes was already on the table.

Qin Guan tried a crusty pancake. Delicious!

The crisp pancake was soaked in thick mutton soup and tasted soft and tender in his mouth.

The Xinjiang rice that followed it was just as wonderful. Qin Guan nearly swallowed his tongue along with the carrots slices and chopped mutton.

A kebab with rose willow sticks followed. The golden baked meat with oil drops smelled excellent on the slightly parched branches of rose willow.

The cluster was much larger than the kebabs Qin Guan had sold. (Actually, Qin Guan could be an unscrupulous merchant.)

The meat was tight. Qin Guan enjoyed himself to the fullest, eating meat in thick slices and drinking wine from a large cup.

Unsatisfied, Qin Guan finally ordered a plate of fried noodles with tomatoes, celery and cutlets. It tasted sour, but the noodles stimulated his appetite to the fullest.

## Chapter 55: 10,000 Yuan

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After dining and wining to satiety, Sister Xue asked for a bowl of yoghurt for each of them. She had talked of that yoghurt very positively.

The freshly-prepared yoghurt, which was placed randomly on the window sill, was served in bowls made of willow. The bowls had an original texture. In those black wooden bowls, the yoghurt seemed whiter, finer and smoother. There were also raisins from Turpan scattered on its surface.

The large, full raisins and thick layer of black sesame made the yoghurt look more attractive.

The waiter handed a small bowl of white granulated sugar to them. There was no sugar in the yoghurt, but customers could add some according to their taste.

Qin Guan held the bowl to take a sip. The aroma of milk together with the special sourness of the fermentation filled his mouth. It's tasty! Qin Guan finished one bowl in a few mouthfuls.

There was still some left in the bowl though. Qin Guan looked at it eagerly. Knowing that he was about to act silly again, Sister Xue rushed to stop him, "Don't lick the bowl! I'll order one more for you!" Qin Guan stared at the bowl regretfully. Can I have one more bowl to lick? He lifted the empty bowl and shouted to the waiter, "One more, please!"

Sister Xue kept an eye on him until dinner was over for fear that he would do something embarrassing again.

She let out a long breath after she drove Professor Li home. Relieved, she drove Qin Guan back to campus.

On the way there, she informed Qin Guan of their future plans, "The second poster shooting for J shirts is in June. They were really satisfied with the outcome last time, so there might be an extra bonus this time."

"You have to continue your lessons with Professor Li until vacation, when you will have some spare time. Professional models never rest though."

"As a part-timer, the company will surely assign some trial jobs to you so they can test your ability. You have to be serious to make a successful debut. It's essential if you want to make money, understand?"

Qin Guan nodded, especially when he heard the word "money".

Before he got out of the car, Sister Xue added, "Watch your figure and stop being crapulent. Don't make me lose face in front of the whole country!"

Qin Guan gestured at her to reassure her before he shut the door and waved. Then he entered the campus.



Without any trouble, Qin Guan had become a professional model. Although he was still a C-level model, it was a good place to start.

The story pauses here temporarily. June, which Qin Guan was the most nervous about, finally came around.

On the first day of June, he put all the memory banks in his backpack and walked to the entrance of the Zhongguancun Mansion nonchalantly.

He didn't go to the third floor right away for fear of being recognized by the shop owner he'd met last time. That would only have made things more complicated.

Qin Guan went around the building, heading directly to the Pacific Digital Building.

There were busy shop assistants everywhere, carrying computer boxes and displaying cases in carts as they moved up and down the corridor.

On the first floor, computers and digital products were on sale. The rest of the shops were basically retailers that assembled and repaired computers for companies and individuals.

Qin Guan took the lift to the fourth floor and consulted the shops one by one about the price of memory banks.

"Sir, do you have any 128M memory banks?"

The shop owner was young, and he scanned Qin Guan from head to toe before he asked, "What for? There are no new products here. If you want a memory bank for your computer, I have a second-hand one. There's only one, but it's surely cheaper than a new one. 120 yuan, does that work for you?"

Qin Guan was speechless. I bought the new memory banks for 79 yuan each, and you're asking me to pay 120 yuan for a second-hand one? Do you think I'm an idiot?

The shop owner seemed to read Qin Guan's mind. He sighed as he said, "I don't want to sell you an old one either. Are you suspicious of my offer? I'm not trying to cheat you. You can ask at the other shops as well. It's a fair price."

Qin Guan was actually happy about it. "How much would a new one cost?" he asked.

The young shop owner answered vaguely, "There's a price for them, but they're not on sale. The standard price in today's market is 246 yuan for a 128M bank. They are out of stock. The dealers have stocked them, but they refuse to sell them. Maybe they're waiting for them to have babies."

Qin Guan asked again carefully, "They're out of stock?"

The shop owner answered excitedly, "Yes! Without banks, I can't do anything but sell other parts. I can't even assemble a computer. I'll lose a lot of business!"

Qin Guan was glad to hear that. "Several days ago, I bought some banks for my friend, who runs an internet cafe. There are still some left. Would you like to buy them?"

The young man suddenly stood up behind the counter. "Let me take a look. Are they new or second-hand? How many do you have?" he asked urgently.

Qin Guan put down his backpack and took out five memory banks.

The shop owner took them in his hands and checked them over carefully. The memory banks could be seen clearly in their transparent plastic packages.

They beared no scratches or traces of being opened, and the trademarks were clear. The young man knew that they were new products right away.

"Do you want to sell them? I'll buy them all at their current market price." He held the banks tightly in his hand, unwilling to let them go.

Qin Guan smiled. "I do!"

The shop owner was straightforward. He took out a calculator and started pressing numbers on it. Then he pushed the calculator toward Qin Guan, showing him the number 1,230 on the screen. "Is

that right?"

Qin Guan picked up the calculator. An enigmatic smile formed on his face as he said, "Deal!"

The young man was really happy to hear that. He counted the bills and handed them to Qin Guan. With these banks, my business will flourish. My shop will be the only one with memory banks in stock. At least five customers will pay extra money for them!

The poor shop owner did not know that there were still 95 memory banks in Qin Guan's backpack. He also didn't know that Qin Guan would sell banks to more shops after he left.

If he had known, he would have surely shouted loudly, "Give them all to me! I want to buy all 100 banks!"

# Chapter 56: The Tyrant's Feast And The Wet Shirt

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It was a pity that the shop owner could not predict the future. Later, Qin Guan sold the banks to dozens of shops in batches of five or ten.

His journey ended successfully.

He sold the memory banks for 246 yuan each.

His small-scale opportunistic practice was finally rewarded.

His investment lasted for four days. His original capital had been 7,900, and in the end he got 24,600 yuan, earning a profit of 16,700 yuan. The ratio was 300%. He was still nervous until he got the final sum of money. Suppressing the urge to cry out loud, he left Zhongguancun as soon as possible.

Depositing the cash into his account at the Construction Bank in Zhongguancun, Qin Guan let out a relieved breath.

To celebrate his successful business, he decided to treat his roommates. He made a call to his dormitory.

"Hello? Is that Wang Lei? This is Qin Guan. I'm treating you! I'll bring a pizza back!"

Cheers were heard through the receiver. Qin Guan massaged his shocked ear, hung up and took the bus to the pizza place near his college.

Domino's Pizza was a restaurant chain for takeaway pizza. Qin Guan and his roommates were frequent customers there.

Without any hesitation, he ordered at the cashier, "Seafood, Super Deluxe, Pepperoni, and Hawaiian, one for each. The large size. 12 inches."

The cashier typed on the keyboard with effort.

This is a frequent customer. Every time our staff are surprised by his good appearance and his ordering speed.

"Also, Spaghetti Seafood Bacon and Spaghetti Bolognese, one for each, Cheesy Bread and Garlic Bread, one for each, and one portion of Seafood and Pork Combo. That's all. Oh, I almost forgot. Is there a free drink for a 200 yuan order?"

The young girl checked the menu and answered, "Yes, there is. Your order costs 355 yuan. We'll give you a large bucket of a soft drink for free. Is there anything else I can get you?"

Qin Guan shook his head. "That's all."

The girl placed the order and took his money. "Here's your change. Please wait a moment. Is it eat-in or takeaway?"

Qin Guan found a seat not far from her. "Takeaway."

The cashier was pleased. I'm so close to this handsome boy. What a lucky day!

Watching the passersby outside the window and listening to the country music playing in the restaurant, Qin Guan enjoyed a leisurely time until his order was ready.

The cashier handed all the food to Qin Guan and smiled sweetly. "Looking forward to your next visit."

Qin Guan returned to his dormitory and found five starving boys in the room.

They all rushed at the bag in his hands like vigorous tigers jumping down a hill.

In a moment, all the boxes were open. There was hot pizza covered in cheese, smooth spaghetti in thick meat sauce, and crisp fried chips and chicken wings.

In 10 minutes, all the food had disappeared.

Everyone started complaining, "This is not enough! There should have been some vegetables too! You better go buy a Sunny Veggie pizza, Qin Guan!"

Foodies were always shameless. Suddenly, Qin Guan's phone rang. It was Sister Xue, who told Qin Guan to go to the second shooting for the J shirts and attend a photography exhibition.

The photographer of the J shirts, who had sent Qin Guan's photos to a competition, had won an award.

The full title of the competition was Top 10 Awards for National Figure Photography. It was held by the "Figure Photography" Magazine every three years since 1993.

3,000 photos by 145 artists from 29 provinces, cities and municipalities had participated in the competition that year. The J shirts photographer had made the top 10.

He had been completely over the moon. He knew that he owed all his success to his luck and his outstanding model, so he had invited Qin Guan to the exhibition.

It was a small-scale exhibition in the photography circle, but the prize winners' works would be exhibited in a small gallery.

Qin Guan was surprised. He had forgotten all about this. He had only met the photographer once, at the shooting site of the J shirts.

The photographer's face was full of joy. The boss of the J shirts was also proud. My model is an official New Silk Road model, and



my photographer is a rising star in figure photography. Plus, my products are selling well, aren't they?

He had experienced a lot of happy events lately. Business was going well and the sale volume was steady.

When the new summer collection came out, his first physical store would open in a new shopping mall, which he considered a very good start.

The boss was very satisfied with Qin Guan. When he put on the new short-sleeved shirts of that year though, his satisfaction reached its peak. Sister Xue kept flattering him, so he gave them a bonus.

The theme of that summer was "cool and refreshing". Through the thin, light material of the shirt, Qin Guan's skin could be seen indistinctly. It looked very attractive.

The photographer put down his camera and thought for a while. Then he asked the boss, "Is there any water?"

"Yes, in the corner. Are you thirsty? I'll ask them to get you some. Little Tian, get a box of mineral water over here!"

The assistant carried the box over. The photographer took a bottle, waved for Qin Guan to approach, and turned around to ask the boss, "Can I get the shirt wet?"

The boss nodded. "Yes, feel free to do whatever you want. Everyone here is at your service."

The photographer pulled Qin Guan over and discussed it with him. "Let's do something sexy. Can I get your shirt wet?"

# Chapter 57: The Photo Exhibition

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Qin Guan looked at Sister Xue, who nodded. The photographer opened a bottle of water and poured it on Qin Guan's body.

The wet shirt was immediately pasted on his body. The photographer looked around, feeling like something was missing. He opened another bottle and handed it to Qin Guan, "Do it yourself. Wet your hair."

Qin Guan poured the water on his head.

His hair hung down, several drops of water falling from its tips. His body was partly hidden and partly visible under his shirt.

The lines of his upper body were clear to the onlookers though. How sexy he looked!

The assistant beside him felt a warm liquid flowing down her nostrils. She was bleeding!

Fortunately, everyone was focused on Qin Guan, so no one laughed at her.

She took a tissue out of her bag and made a roll, pushing it up her nose to stop the bleeding. Then she turned to look at the handsome young man again. I won't leave the front line on account of some minor injury. I won't admit defeat!

Qin Guan held up his wet fringe to expose his forehead. Water drops ran down his face, sweeping over his lips and falling on the floor.

The photographer captured the moment, taking beautiful photos. Then he asked Qin Guan to touch his body with his hands and take an alluring pose.

Ever since he had started studying with Professor Li, Qin Guan had made great progress in his poses. He was way better than last time, which could be considered a qualitative leap.

Before, Qin Guan had depended solely on his face, but now he had gotten good at body language and expressing emotions.

The series of photos was finished, and Sister Xue handed him a towel to clean himself up. After he changed his clothes, the photographer walked over and said, "Here are your tickets. You can enjoy some fruit over there." Qin Guan took the two tickets. Before he could say thank you though, Sister Xue broke in, "Sun, I need your help with getting paid."

The photographer was taken aback. "What's the matter?"

Sister Xue stepped forward and said in low voice, "You know that Qin Guan has a contract with New Silk Road?"

The photographer nodded. "This is good for his development in the future."

Sister Xue pretended to look sad. "We only signed a subordinating contract. All his affairs are in my hand, but all models have to have a portfolio in the company, which the clients look through before they select a model."

"Qin Guan has no photos in his portfolio, so I thought of you."

"You are a good photographer and you've cooperated with him three times. There is a mutual understanding between you, so I'd be assured if you took some photos of him."

"I don't trust the photographers of New Silk Road. He is not their model, and if they took bad photos of him, his portfolio would be ruined."

The photographer rubbed his jaw. "You're right. These photos are a model's first contact with the clients. They're the most important factor. Qin Guan is my lucky star. I'll help him!"

Sister Xue was very pleased. She believed that Sun Pengtao was a really good photographer. He didn't get lots of opportunities though, that's why he stayed in that small studio and found jobs for himself.

Given a chance, he might soar up to the sky, so it would be better for Qin Guan to get close to him while he was still a nobody.

Sister Xue was really enthusiastic. "I need a natural photo, an

artistic photo, and a standard ID photo. 1,000 yuan in total. Does that work for you?"

Three photos in negative film and self-prepared costumes. This was a really good deal for a photographer who ran a studio.

Sun Pengtao understood that Sister Xue trusted him and answered yes without hesitation.

The rest of the photos were taken smoothly. Qin Guan wore the new summer shirt, which was light yellow with a darker shade at the lower hem.

In his opinion, that designer was a leader in the fashion industry. This style would get really popular after 2005. The changing light yellow color formed splendid flowers on the shirt.

Following the concept, Qin Guan smiled fervently. Everyone could feel his enthusiasm through the photos.

The assistant shifted her eyes between Qin Guan and the pictures. Then she took another tissue and pushed a roll into her other nostril.

They were very busy the following days. Sister Xue and Qin Guan went to see the National Figure Photography Awards Exhibition. The expanded figure photos were hanging on the walls, the artists' names written under their work.

Some photos were bright-colored or distinct, and had a gorgeous effect, while others were realistic and moved the audience's heart. Qin Guan's photos were also outstanding. They were clean, simple, and unique. Their leisurely style was just like a breeze.

Qin Guan and Sister Xue read the introduction carefully.

Sun Pengtao is a photographer from the capital. He has engaged in photography for eight years... It was Sun's biography.

There was a long comment underneath, which was kind of over the top.

According to their attitude, I divide photographers into two different groups, the technology-oriented ones and theme-oriented ones.

The former ones are fascinated by the camera, lenses and technology parameters, which are complicated and mysterious. They think that cameras are lovely pets instead of tools for shooting.

Those photographers own the best equipment and are in endless pursuit of new models.

Like a photography encyclopaedia, they're proud of expanding 35mm plates to no-particle photos of 16x20 inches. They know the advantages of all different kinds of cameras, but they can seldom present us with valuable work. They concentrate on the tools (the

equipment) of photography, instead of the purpose (the photos).

Those interested in the works, or rather the themes of photography, are exactly the opposite.

Unlike technology-oriented photographers, who focus on equipment and skill, they are attracted to various pictures, such as figures, streets, urban areas, landscapes, nature, modern architecture, the relics of ancient Rome, sports contests, or everyday life.

They know that they can take a picture in countless different ways, and some images can be processed to become even better. They study the problems of technology. Although some of them are confident with using photography tools, Sun Pengtao both engages in experimenting with technology tools and creates works that capture the audience.

Many details of his work are immature, but everywhere in his work we can find all the advantages of the second kind of photographers I mentioned above.

We can see the spirit of the artist in his work. Sun Pengtao is one of the most recommended photographers of this year.



# Chapter 58: Model Business Photos

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The introduction was the longest part of the exhibition. Qin Guan and Sister Xue exchanged a look in silent despair. Can we tell everyone that the photos were just an inspiration during a simple poster shooting?

It was really hard to understand artists.

After visiting the exhibition, Sister Xue drove the excited photographer and Qin Guan back to the studio so they could work on Qin Guan's business photos.

Sister Xue took two outfits out of the trunk excitedly.

Both the suit and the casual clothes looked really expensive. They seemed extremely delicate as they hung in plastic covers in a formal way.

In the studio, Sister Xue unzipped the covers and took out a summer style GIVENCHY suit.

She had taken advantage of her connections to borrow them from a designer brand renting store for free.

The costume consisted of a black woollen coat with a single button, a loose T-shirt, woollen pants, and shoes made of smooth black leather. It was an exact replica of a suit from the standard GIVENCHY runway show in the summer. Even the size was the

same.

It fit Qin Guan quite well. The black suit hung down slightly, and the black round-collar T-shirt made Qin Guan look natural and unrestrained.

The photographer felt inspired. "Can you walk on the T stage?" he asked.

Qin Guan nodded, and the photographer grew even more excited. He asked his assistant to arrange the lights on the T stage, where Qin Guan would perform.

Once Qin Guan strode from the darkness into the light, the photographer began to press the camera button. Only when Qin Guan left the spotlight again did Sister Xue come to her senses.

Excellent! The coat fit his waist perfectly, and the straight pants complimented his long legs.

In the photos, Qin Guan was lifting one of his feet to step forward against the yogan background.

The photographer asked Qin Guan to take off the T-shirt for one more series of photos.

Qin Guan took off all the clothes on his upper body and put on the coat again. The photographer held his jaw and stared at him. "Hold the collar with both hands as if you're tearing it apart."

Qin Guan did as he was told. The dim yellow light from above and the caesious curtain made the whole background seem mysterious.

The light fell softly on the black coat and on Qin Guan's naked chest, which seemed even smoother under the light.

The contrast between Qin Guan's wild pose and his soft skin looked very attractive. The audience would focus on his figure right away.

Sister Xue was quite satisfied with the photographer. In her opinion, Sun Pengtao and Qin Guan had great potential. They will turn into Chinese dragons and fly high into the sky. These photos will give Qin Guan an advantage.

While Qin Guan was changing clothes, Sister Xue shouted loudly from outside the fitting room, "Are you naked?"

"Let me put on some pants!" Qin Guan answered in confusion. A new pair of underpants in a packaged box flied in from outside.

"That's your gift! Put them on and let's take some underwear photos."

Qin Guan took out the underpants. Whoops! They're Calvin Klein. He put them on right away after picking off the label.

It was a pair of simple seamless underpants. The seams were all weaved together. The underwear covered Qin Guan's hips completely, making him feel as comfortable as if he was naked.

With only the underpants on, Qin Guan walked under the lights. His delicate pace would have made any audience feel a sense of desire, sexiness, allure, luxury and enthusiasm, just like an unexpected romance.

The photographer asked Qin Guan to lean against a pillar. The smooth lines of his body exhibited the power of the Creator and the utmost beauty a human being could possess.

Only one series of underwear photos were needed. It would only take up a small space on the right side of his model business card. All the staff in the studio were disappointed that the underwear shoot was over. Qin Guan's beauty was a feast for the eyes, and that feast had ended almost as soon as it had begun.

After finishing this series, Qin Guan changed into the GIVENCHY casual summer outfit.

The outfit included a V-neck, jacket-like shirt with a picture of Jesus, a loose T-shirt with pockets, a pair of Bermuda shorts made of a fabric that did not wrinkle, smooth ocean blue buttermilk-skin skateboard shoes, and a thick bracelet with keys.

The combination of white, blue and grey gave off a sense of casualness and leisure.

The photographer realized that Qin Guan would take photos in casual clothes as soon as he saw the outfit.

Sun Pengtao was the best at taking candid photos. He asked Qin Guan to just act natural.

Qin Guan planned to show him what he had learned from Professor Li. He took a casual pose by putting his hands in his pockets and supporting them against his hips. Sister Xue was delighted. The boy has finally learned how to show off his advantages.

The photos were finished fast. There was only one photo left.

On a model's professional business card, the main photo would take up half the page, while the other nine smaller photos would take up the other half.

Out of the 10 photos, it was the main photo on the left that would attract the clients' attention right away.

That's why the main photo was at the centre of the page. All the models would show their best image in that photo. Sister Xue and the photographer hesitated. Qin Guan had both an outstanding face and figure. How could they choose one?

They had a long discussion and finally decided on a full-body picture. As a good model, Qin Guan would be able to withstand the exposure. Just a handsome face would have limited him to a still

model level after all.

# Chapter 59: The High School General Examination

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They couldn't take a full-body picture of Qin Guan though, because it might be too small for the audience. They discussed it and finally decided to take a photo from his knees up.

A nude picture would be even better. Sister Xue asked Qin Guan to take off his coat and expose his abdominal muscles and V-line. She unfastened the first button of his jeans and pulled them down a little. Perfect! They would lure the audience with his sexy body. It was so cunning!

When the photos were finished, as a sophisticated lady who had seen countless beauties, Sister Xue believed that she would have been fascinated by Qin Guan. She counted 10 bills and handed them to the photographer, who had cooperated with her gladly. "Thank you! You're welcome back anytime."

Once he finished the post-production, the photographer would call Sister Xue. Until then, Qin Guan could relax. A lot of affairs had come up recently, and Qin Guan had been busy as a bee. Now he could finally make some testing papers for Huang Jiajia.

In June, Huang Jiajia would take her final examinations, and in September, when the schools opened again, she would join the army for the College Entrance Examination.

Qin Guan had promised Huang Jiajia at the end of the Spring Festival that if her scores were improved in the General

Examination, he would treat her to snacks at Carrefour. There was only about 800 yuan left in his shopping card, but hopefully it would be enough for her highness. In half a year, she had changed a lot. His courses were much easier for her than they used to be. Huang Jiajia was no longer a rebel, but a very smart lady.

Her vigor in studying shamed Qin Guan. She had asked her mother to register for several lessons after school. As she corrected her mistakes, she had attracted the attention of her teachers at school. A hard-working student was welcome everywhere, even in a school with a low enrolment rate. As a result, the teachers had begun to focus on Huang Jiajia both in and out of class. By getting help from both sides, Huang Jiajia's scores had been getting better and better.

Qin Guan returned to his dormitory and worked on the papers for Huang Jiajia during his leisure time. He would test her that weekend.

Before the weekend, Qin Guan's date request was turned down by Cong Nianwei once again. Irritated by his roommates' displays of affection in the dormitory, Qin Guan took the papers and headed for Huang Jiajia's home to avoid beating his friends up.

Qin Guan entered Huang Jiajia's home and found her sitting at the table quietly with her pen and draft paper. This will be my last chance to earn his praise. It was their last lesson before the General Examinations and the finals. It was showdown.

Qin Guan spread the papers on the table. "My papers include less subjects than your examination. Luckily, these courses are



focusing on memory. You can work on them yourself. Today we'll focus on the five main subjects. Let's start with Chinese." Huang Jiajia nodded eagerly and picked up the first paper. Lowering her head, she began to write quickly. Meanwhile, Qin Guan read a book beside her.

June was drawing near, and the temperature was getting higher and higher, signalling the arrival of summer vacation. However, before the summer holidays, students had to go through the examination period.

There was also a heated competition for the scholarship that semester. For Qin Guan, who had a balance of more than 30,000 yuan, that scholarship was still a large source of income. All that money was his reward for working hard and his capital for launching his business. As a young man, I can only gradually accumulate a limited capital.

The leaves outside the windows rustled in the breeze as an early summer cicada sang along, joining their private celebration.

Under the yellow lights inside the house, two figures were sitting at a table. One of them was writing swiftly while the other was reading carefully. What a peaceful time!

When Huang Jiajia finished writing, Qin Guan looked up from his book. He corrected her papers with a red ballpoint pen as Huang Jiajia craned her neck to look, sitting on pins and needles.

The test would reflect her level in the General Examination in a

way, and the result of the General Examination would affect her chances of getting treated to snacks by Qin Guan and dating him. Actually, Huang Jiajia was over-thinking things. The General Examination would only cover the most basic knowledge points of the textbooks.

When Qin Guan was done, Huang Jiajia was pleased by the results.

Chinese: 98

Math: 88

English: 92

Chemistry: 90

Science: 91

Except for Math, all her other scores were above 90. Her total score was 459, which meant that she could possibly enroll at a community college.

Huang Jiajia was really excited. Although she hadn't passed Math, she had made great progress. She was just thinking of acting like a spoiled child and begging Qin Guan for praise, when he looked at his watch and stood up. It was not early for him, so he

planned to leave. They would meet again after Huang Jiajia had taken the General Examination.

Huang Jiajia was both angry and disappointed. Qin Guan's mind was occupied by his courses, his part-time jobs and Cong Nianwei, so she had failed to find a way in.

She threw her teddy bear on the floor with force. I hate him and love him at the same time! He's such a simple-minded man, both in my reach and out of it... As Huang Jiajia thought about how she had gotten along with Qin Guan, she picked up her teddy bear again and held it in her arms.

Unaware that he had broken her young heart, Qin Guan was riding his shabby bicycle on his way back to college. Huang Jiajia's good scores had given him a sense of achievement that had healed the wound caused by Cong Nianwei. He parked his bike and returned to his dormitory with his books.

All his roommates were studying inside. What cunning boys! They pretended to be at ease in the classroom, but reverted to their original status when they came back home. They were the most annoying students in the whole college. They acted relaxed before others, smiling about their high scores as they said, "It was unexpected! I was only listening to the tutor randomly. How could I have gotten such a high score?"

# Chapter 60: Super Cheater

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They would actually hide in dark corners and read books desperately. Qin Guan had decided that except him and Liu Xiaoyang, all the others in his dormitory had really cunning personalities. Qin Guan set his book on the table. Honest students like me are rare these days. (You are already beyond the scope of examination, you show-off!)

Liu Xiaoyang waved his game console at Qin Guan. "Do you want to play?" Qin Guan stood up curiously, only to find Liu Xiaoyang playing Tetris. The console was quite new. He was speechless. "Isn't this an old game? Why are you still playing it?"

"I discovered a game secret!" Liu Xiaoyang answered excitedly.

"What is it?" Qin Guan asked torpidly.

Liu looked around before he said in a low voice, "The record can be renewed repeatedly. I'm working on the scores in various ways."

Qin Guan left him and went straight to the bathroom. I'm not sure if he's a genius or an idiot.

Nothing happened that night.

Huang Jiajia entered her examination room on June 27th 1999, at the same time that Qin Guan was taking his own exams. It was an

unprecedented exam held at the college lecture theatre. The large room provided many loopholes to take advantage of. All the students tried their best to get a passing mark.

Some of them had reprinted the material in a smaller format. Without a magnifying glass, Qin Guan couldn't read it at all, but he admired the eyesight of the people who could.

Some students had also carved the answers on their desks or drawers in advance. They possessed excellent carving abilities.

The methods mentioned above were only simple measures the students had taken beforehand, but more striking skills would follow.

The invigilator was the top hunter in the college. She tutored about Marxism-Leninism. As she was passing out the papers, she reminded the students once again, "Cheaters will be announced all over university, and their scores will be cancelled. I won't let anybody off."

Qin Guan watched the boy sitting in front of him shiver and put the books under his bottom away.

The bell rang, and the exam began. For naughty students, that threat meant nothing. They would risk their own lives to get a passing mark.

Qin Guan observed the cheaters as he wrote.

A fat student to his right moved. He pushed the desk and a textbook slid from the drawer and fell onto his legs. He had one hand on the desk to prevent others from seeing while he turned the pages of the book with his other hand. He found the right place and put the answers down on his paper.

How skillful of him!

Qin Guan finished a question and looked to his left, discovering another cheater. The superpower of perspective eyes was hardly possessed by common people. Copying answers off others was a most familiar skill. Cheaters observed carefully the answers of students sitting around them and put them down on their own papers.

Several students like that had gathered around Qin Guan and Wang Lei. Of course, they didn't copy all their original answers. They would intentionally make some mistakes so their papers wouldn't be identical.

After watching them, Qin Guan concentrated on his own paper. It took him only 50 minutes to finish it, while the exam was supposed to take students one hour and a half to complete. He scanned his paper from beginning to end. I'll get a perfect mark again, no doubt.

Before he handed in his paper, another girl from his department stood up and handed in her own. Shortly thereafter, Qin Guan saw an apple appear outside the window. It must be that girl!

Glancing at the boy sitting beside the window, everything suddenly became clear. The two of them were boyfriend and girlfriend and were known around the college for their different interests. The girl was focused on her courses, while the boy was a fan of video games.

An apple appeared outside the window once again. The boy began to write swiftly on his paper. Qin Guan looked down at his own paper and realized the answers of the first two multiple choice questions were both A.

When a banana followed, Qin Guan tried his best to keep a straight face.

Finally, after Qin Guan had waited for a long time, a C appeared. What's that? Again! A chestnut? Chinese people are really talented.

Not long after, they were discovered by other students. They all could do nothing but watch, as they didn't know what the corresponding questions were.

It was an uncopied success. The boy was laughing to himself. Qin Guan compared his answers to the girl's and found that she had made two mistakes.

When the bell rang, Qin Guan handed in his paper and followed the boy outside the classroom. When he found the couple, the two of them were eating the banana and apple. With an obscene smile, Qin Guan jumped in front of them. "The answer of the last

question was chestnut, not apple. You were wrong!"



# Chapter 61: Two Dependent People

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The boy looked at the girl in unconscious surprise. "I was afraid to have the same answers as you. I didn't want to make the tutor suspicious, so I changed my last answer to C."

Well, the guy might get a higher score than his girlfriend after all.

Qin Guan shared the secret with them and left in satisfaction. The girl suddenly squeezed her boyfriend and shouted, "He is Qin Guan!"

"Qin Guan?" The boy was confused. "Is he famous or something?"

The girl glanced at him unhappily, and said with a pout, "You should go to class more often. You have skipped so many classes that you don't even recognize the most renowned student in our university."

"Qin Guan is a straight-A student with a full scholarship in the Department of Accounting. My roommate, who went to the college ball, found his dancing skills quite good."

"Plus, the most fashionable girl in my neighbourhood has a shirt poster of him somewhere. Her roommates fought over that poster furiously. They decided to hang it up on the wall facing the door of their dormitory."

"Actually, he's pretty legendary," the girl went on.

She got more and more excited, while the boy got more and more uncomfortable. I think my girlfriend would follow Qin Guan if he so much as whistled at her. I should attend more classes to protect my love.

Qin Guan didn't know that he had unconsciously saved a strong-willed young man. He called Huang Jiajia's mother when he returned his dormitory. Huang Jiajia was his student, so he had to keep an eye on her score in the general student examination.

Huang Jiajia's mother sounded happy on the phone. She discussed her daughter's status with Qin Guan. According to her, Huang Jiajia was quite happy after finishing the exam, which reassured Qin Guan.

At the time, arranging his vacation was his first priority. First, I should buy a sleeper ticket for my girlfriend. It would be too tiring to sit on the train.

Qin Guan had a lot of spare time before summer vacation. He had bought two student sleeper tickets from a scalper, which had cost him an extra 100 yuan in total. Anyway, I have a 10,000-yuan income now. I can make better arrangements for my girlfriend so she can have a more comfortable journey home.

Summer vacation came in July, and it was a golden time for college students. Qin Guan carried Cong Nianwei's luggage off the train, treating her like a queen. They had finally reached the end of

their trip, which was city of Y, their hometown.

Neither of their parents had come to the station to pick them up. It seemed that after meeting each other, they had become friends.

In such a small city, a short chat was enough to clear one's public relationship. Most people had common friends or relatives, which connected them in a way.

Their parents had soon gotten familiar with each other over some common interests. When they knew that their son and daughter would return home together again, they had automatically chosen not to show up at the station.

Qin Guan is a quite reliable young man. Parents can express their love for their children by making breakfast at home.

Qin Guan pulled their luggage along and stopped a taxi. He took Cong Nianwei home first.

When she got out of the taxi, Qin Guan remembered to hold her hand. "Do give me a call," he urged her. "I have so many plans for summer vacation."

Cong Nianwei looked at the smiling driver in the front seat shyly before pulling her hand away. "I know. Wait for my call." Then she took her suitcase and ran into the building.

When her back was out of sight, Qin Guan told his address to the

driver.

A warm, sweet breakfast was ready when he got there. It was take-away breakfast from the Blue-White Group. It was the first new project after his mother's bread factory had been absorbed by the Blue-White Group.

That year, staple food retail stores with that symbolic blue roof and white walls could be seen everywhere in the urban area. Every day there would be trucks carrying supplies to retail stores.

The food-processing plants subordinated to the China Administration of Grain had retreated from the stands in the farmer's market, and Blue-White Group staple food appeared on the dining tables of the residents of Y city in a more convenient manner.

That day, Qin Guan had his first Blue-White Group breakfast after returning to Y city.

It included newly-ground, aromatic soybean milk and big crispy, fried bread sticks. (The sticks were really big. They were actually longer than a laptop.) Qin Guan's mother had bought two steamed stuffed buns with braised pork and soy sauce as well, for fear that it wouldn't be enough for her son.

There were also homemade radish pickles, which were slightly sweet.

After breakfast, Qin Guan thought for a while before asking his parents, who were about to go out, "Are we doing anything today?"

"No, do you have any arrangements?" they answered.

Qin Guan waved his hand. "I want to have a good day's sleep. I'll turn off my cell phone. Don't worry about me, I'll stay at home."

His parents nodded in understanding and left for work. Qin Guan rubbed his hands together, pulled the phone line out, turned off his cell phone, and collapsed on his bed.

It was getting hot, so his quilt had been replaced by a thinner one. Qin Guan arranged his pillow, which was filled with buckwheat hulls, into the most comfortable shape and fell asleep.

He had just fallen asleep when there was a knock on the door. Burying his head under the covers, Qin Guan pretended to hear nothing. The people outside were quite stubborn though. They kept knocking and shouting, "Qinnnnnnn... Guannnnnnn!"

Grinding his teeth, Qin Guan jumped out of bed in a roll. He opened the door and found Zhou Jing and Li Jian there. They entered one by one, changing into slippers at the shoe case without any shame.

They were both complaining, "You're not a loyal friend, Qin Guan. One of my remote relatives saw you get off a taxi and come home. You had decided not to tell us that you returned, is that

right?"

Qin Guan was quite angry. Those evil friends won't leave me alone, even when I pull the line out. There goes my sleep.

Sitting on the couch in the living room, Qin Guan asked helplessly, "Tell me then. What's the matter?"

Zhou Jing answered matter-of-factly, "Did you forget? We have to make money. My pocket money for summer vacation depends on you!"

Qin Guan got even angrier. "Why are you here again?" he said helplessly, "Can't you find some other way to make money yourselves? I'll return to college in August."

Li Jian took a frozen lollipop from Qin Guan's fridge before he asked in confusion, "Why are you returning so early? Aren't you going to enjoy your summer vacation?"

"I'll participate in the Chinese New Model Competition, which will take place between August 20th and 30th. I have to prepare in advance."

Zhou Jing and Li Jian were really surprised by the news. Their mouths opened so wide that one could have jammed an egg in them. With a particularly regretful expression, they said, "So you decided to quit your studies and make a living off your looks. Congratulations! You took a shortcut to life!"

## Chapter 62: Business On The Beach

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Qin Guan clapped Zhou Jing's hand off and answered, "No, it's only a part-time job. I have signed a contract with a model agency as a C-level model, just to state that I engage in the profession. My tutor said that I could advance to B-level and win a prize. Then my salary would be much higher. That's why I want to participate in a competition."

Zhou Jing and Li Jian nodded together in understanding. Their reaction changed at once. They hugged Qin Guan from both sides and said, "It's still early July. It's about a month and a half from the middle of August. We can make a good plan for making money."

Qin Guan was quite annoyed. He started arguing with them, "I will go on dates with Cong Nianwei. I have neither seen a movie, nor gone shopping with her in a while. I have to reject your proposal."

They all rolled together into a ball. Li Jian sat on Qin Guan, panting. "You can make time for both dating and making money. I believe in you. You are the best money-grubber in Y city."

Qin Guan couldn't breathe under his 100 kilos. He patted the floor hard and shouted, "Get up, Li Jian! You'll break me!"

"No! I won't get up unless you come up with an idea for making money!"

Just as he was about to choke, Qin Guan's brain started working at a very high speed. Suddenly, inspiration hit him.

"I've got it! Move your ass away from me!" Zhou Jing jumped over immediately and pulled Li Jian up. Qin Guan was lying on the floor in distress like a limp noodle.

They both asked urgently, "What kind of business is it? Tell us!"

Qin Guan stood up from the floor and lay down on the couch before saying, "We can set up a stand on the beach."

Zhou Jing and Li Jian were surprised. "Shall we sell shish kebab again? The beach is full of kebab stands. Big restaurants are fighting over a spare place. How could we compete with them?"

Qin Guan shook his head, "We won't sell kebab. That was quite a tiring job. We'd be busy the whole day. My plan is to get a counter on the first swimming beach."

"Zhou Jing, you have to buy a glass counter from the canteen of the Bureau of Retired Veteran Cadres. Then you will go find your second aunt. She's selling wholesale clothes in Sanzhan Market, isn't she? Ask her about the price of swimsuits this year."

"Li Jian, you go to the Changsheng Freezing Drink Factory and buy some frozen lollipops and sodas for wholesale. That's our current arrangement. If we come up with anything else, we'll meet and discuss it. By the way, Zhou Jing, on your way to Sanzhan



Market, you should have a look at the stands selling swimming rings. When everything is ready, we'll meet at my house."

Li Jian and Zhou Jing broke up in a hubbub, busy with their own affairs.

In 1999, the city of Y had not made the list of the country's best cities based on living conditions, and the tourism industry had not been explored on a large scale.

The sky there was clean blue and the ocean was pure green. Two small swimming beaches were enough for the residents of the city to enjoy a leisurely vacation.

On his shabby bike, Qin Guan jangled through two alleys across his house to reach the beach, which was still quiet.

The summer sunshine was warm against the sand, and the sea breeze was blowing against his face, smelling slightly of fish. A group of seagulls with white feathers and black wings were gathered together. They did not look completely sober. Their eyes were only half open.

A small crab was running transversely on the white-yellow sand. The leisurely, beautiful scene made Qin Guan suddenly want to play a game. He pedalled hard twice and rushed into the sand with his bike.

The bike was instantly trapped deep into the sand. Qin Guan took

the opportunity to throw it away and lie down on the sand facing the sky. The startled seagulls woke up and spread their wings to fly away.

One or two of them, who were in charge of alarming the rest, turned around to check the situation.

They saw a strange human lying on the soft sand in a "大" posture. Qin Guan smiled with his eyes closed. He felt quite comfortable in the sunshine.

He lay down on the beach until the sun was high in the sky and the sand was a little hot. Then he stood up again.

He shook the sand off his body, took off his shoes and walked to the reception of the first swimming beach barefoot.

The reception in 1999 was quite simple. There was only a small window selling tickets and a simple oblong bathing place. There were two bathing rooms for ladies and gentlemen on both sides of the window.

The swimmers in the sea had to be experienced as their bodies were rough in the sea water, and there was sand in their hair and bodies. If they walked home or back to their hotels in their wet swimsuits, they would be quite uncomfortable though.

The simple bathing rooms of the first swimming beach provided the swimmers with hot water for showering. It only cost three

yuan to take a shower there. Although there were only sprayers with big iron tubes, they were quite practical for swimmers.

As a result, the ticket window was the most crowded place on the beach. Qin Guan went there to talk to the old woman selling the tickets.

It was not a weekend, so she was not that busy. Sister Liu liked chatting with handsome young men. She agreed to Qin Guan's request without any hesitation.

The bathing room was her private business, which had belonged to her husband.

Part of her income was submitted to the government, but the 100 yuan Qin Guan would pay her as rent would be a bonus. He wouldn't occupy room in her ticket booth. He would only set up an outdoor counter beside the bathing rooms. That was okay with her.

When Qin Guan ended their discussion and walked out of the ticket booth, he remembered that he had forgotten to tell Zhou Jing something. He called Zhou Jing, who sounded a little annoyed. "You're just in time, Qin Guan! There are so many types of swimsuits. I'm really confused. Come here and help me!"

Qin Guan was speechless. "Give me the number of the stand. I'll take a bus there."

"It's in the third row, number 1133. Hurry!" Zhou Jing hung up.

The Sanzhan Wholesale Market was located on the most flourishing street in the centre of Y city. It was south of the North Road Bus Station and the Port Passenger Station, and north of the Master Station for Remote Shuttle Buses . It was also only 15 kilometres from the airport.

The market engaged mainly in wholesale and retail of computers, household appliances, shoes and makeup. It was the most famous distributing centre in Y city.

The wholesalers were working hard to promote famous brands, such as Sama leisure costumes, Diri T-shirts, Sister Han minority costumes, Wencheng Princess shoes, and others.

## Chapter 63: Wholesale Market

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Qin Guan's destination was Zhou Jing's second aunt's stand at the Sanzhan Clothing Market of Y city. When he reached the stand, Qin Guan found Zhou Jing carrying packages up and down, acting as a cooley for his aunt.

The packages were carried out of warehouse and taken away by retail merchants. Zhou Jing's aunt looked busy as she shouted to Qin Guan, "Have a seat, Qin Guan! Was it hot on the way? Shall I buy you an ice-cream?"

Zhou Jing wanted to cry, but he couldn't shed a tear. "You are my born aunt. Why do you treat others better than me?"

His aunt glanced at him in dislike before she turned to Qin Guan enthusiastically, "What's the matter, Qin Guan? Zhou Jing is too stupid to explain the situation."

Qin Guan smiled at her. "Aunt, Zhou Jing, Li Jian and I have a stand on the first swimming beach. We want to sell swimsuits and rent swimming rings. I know that you have a flourishing business in the market, so I came here to ask you for ideas."

The woman smiled, and wrinkles formed on her face at his praise. Zhou Jing murmured beside her, "It's only a small stand. Barely six square metres..."

"Bang!" Before he could finish his words, his aunt had hit him over the head. "And you blamed me for prejudice! Hear what you

just said! You are my born nephew!"

Qin Guan continued in a hush, "Don't listen to him, aunt. I just want to know if we could pay you after making sales. You know we are only college students."

The aunt smiled and covered her mouth. "That's fine. Summer is close, and I'm selling lots of swimsuits. Your requirement is not unreasonable. You can choose any style or size you like. I'll only charge you for the purchasing cost. The sales volume will depend on you."

Qin Guan immediately answered with a sweet smile, "Thank you so much, my aunt! You take care of your own business. Don't worry about us. We'll select ourselves."

The aunt nodded and pointed at the goods on the shelves. "Okay, I'll leave you alone. You can put them in a bag. Just tell me the type and amount when you're done."

They both nodded. One of them held the bag while the other selected the swimsuits.

Qin Guan sighed at the swimsuit styles as he approached the shelves. They were all really conservative. The most fashionable one was a half-skirt suit that left the waist bare.

To make a long story short, Qin Guan selected ten male one-size swimming trunks, five of which were three-cornered. The others

were all boxers shorts.

Then he selected ten one-size trunks for boys and ten swimsuits for girls between the ages of six and ten, which were all lovely seersuckers and colourful one-pieces.

Seersucker swimsuits were the most popular style of the time, and they were famous for their small, bubble-like wrinkles. Nowadays, they would have been considered rustic, but they were the most fashionable swimsuit at the time.

Qin Guan selected ten one-piece swimsuits for ladies and two bikinis that left their navels exposed. He was afraid that the bikinis wouldn't be accepted by the conservative residents of Y city.

That was enough for the first day. After all, most of the tourists would bring their own swimsuits. Qin Guan's sales would depend solely on his taste.

They recorded the sizes and amount of the selected swimsuits and put them all in a bag. Then they bid farewell to Zhou Jing's aunt and left for the culture and sport equipment wholesale market. There was a stand selling swimming rings in a corner.

Qin Guan asked the vendor only for thick rings made of rubber, as well as tedious red ones for kids. Zhou Jing pointed at the colourful rings made of thin plastic and asked him in confusion, "Those look prettier. Why didn't you choose them?"

Qin Guan looked at him speechlessly. "I have nothing to say to you. Your IQ has hit rock bottom. Who would use rings made of such materials? Didn't you notice that I chose the rings with the best durability? We also have to check for leaks. There are waves and wind in the sea, it's not like a pool. A sharp stone could break your ring, and a big wave could take you and your ring away. The most essential factor in choosing a ring is the safety of a person who can't swim. Mind your IQ, please."

Zhou Jing touched his head in shame. As a local person who had been swimming in the sea ever since he was a kid, he really had no idea about swimming rings.

Qin Guan chose three black rubber rings and two red rings for kids. The bright color would make the ring stand out when it floated in the sea. If a kid was in danger and asked for help, the adults in the area would find it easily.

He also remembered to buy a mini inflater before they left. The two of them were uncomfortable as they went out of the market.

Qin Guan had three rings on his body, while Zhou Jing carried two rings and all the swimsuits.

Nothing can be done. Let's go home first.

When they returned home, Qin Guan was still busy. He transferred all the frozen seafood left from the Spring Festival from the small ice tank to the freezing chamber of the fridge. The ice tank, which was now empty, would be used to hold the cool



drinks Li Jian would bring back. Qin Guan found a nylon rope and tied the five rings together so they would be easier to carry.

What they needed now was only umbrellas and a shelf, which had to be made by professionals. Qin Guan called his elder cousin to describe the type of shelf on which they would hang the swimsuits. Actually, it was an iron gauze on square shelves.

The work was simple, and his cousin answered without any hesitation. He had been afraid that Qin Guan might be his competitor in the kebab business. It was currently peak season for the night market.

When the shelf was finished, Qin Guan sent Zhou Jing to his father's unit in the Bureau of Retired Veteran Cadres. It was rumored that the retired cadres had held a sports meeting and had more than ten large umbrellas left. Although the title of the bureau was printed on them, they were still good for providing shade. Zhou Jing borrowed them for re-usage, which was redevelopment of effective resources.

While Zhou Jing was gone, Qin Guan took an Changsheng ice cube with a rich milk flavour, lay down on the couch joyfully and turned on the TV.

A rerun of a series called "Youth, Start Off" was on. An actress named Fan Pingping was the leading star. Qin Guan spit the ice cube out.

What the hell is this series even about? On the screen, Fan

Pingping had baby fat and short hair, which reminded Qin Guan of his past life.

They had been in the same senior high school and the same grade. It was a pity that in his past life, Qin Guan had been a loser. He had been one of those boys who just drooled over the girls of their dreams.

## Chapter 64: Recalling Fang Pingping (Bingbing)

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At the time, Fang Pingping had been too tall for Qin Guan, who had been short in his past life. At 167 centimeters, she had been the beauty queen of his senior high school.

Unsurprisingly, she had been selected as the drum and bugle corps leader, the standard bearer, and so on. At the time, Cong Nianwei had been a little girl with child-like hair, who didn't stand a chance against Fang Pingping's female elegance.

Qin Guan remembered that in his past life, all the dancing performances at the Spring Festival school party had been performed by group dancers, except for Fang Pingping, who had performed a solo routine.

In a shining, colorful minority dress, she had stood up and danced happily. She had been so beautiful! Stop it. Or shall I think about the jokes she made? Qin Guan would have felt sorry for Cong Nianwei, except he didn't know much about her jokes. They had belonged to different worlds.

One of them had been a working class straight-A student, while the other had been the leader of the art class. They had moved in two parallel lines that never crossed.

Qin Guan sighed and sucked on the ice cube again. As far as he could remember, there had only been two times when he had met goddess Fang.

The first one had been during their first exams for class-dividing when the school had opened. They hadn't known each other then. Their numbers for the unified test of the whole grade had been mixed up. On that day, Qin Guan had arrived in the classroom just before the bell had rung.

He had entered the unfamiliar room and seen Fang Pingping sitting in the back row. She had looked conspicuous among that group of freshmen who had no idea who that beauty was.

With a high ponytail and bangs, and a pair of amorous eyes, she had looked particularly charming, attracting the attention of every boy in the room.

Qin Guan had hastened to take his seat as the teacher had walked in with the papers. While the papers had been given out, he had heard the conversation between Fang Pingping and the boy sitting in front of her.

The boy had said bravely, "I'm quite confident about the test. Do you know how much I got in the entrance exams for the No.1 Junior High School? 600 points! No more or less."

Fang Pingping's eyes had shined immediately before she had said in a soft voice, "I admire straight-A students the most. I'm no good at studying myself."

The boy had suddenly felt like a guardian angel. He had handed over the papers to Fang Pingping and made a promise to her,

"Don't worry. I'll push my paper to the side when I'm done."

Fang Pingping had given him an encouraging smile. "Cheers!" The boy had started writing swiftly with renewed energy.

Qin Guan had been envious of their conversation. Why didn't they give me that seat? I could also have shown my bravery to the goddess. I'm short, fat, and hairy, so I have nothing to show off about except my scores.

In the end, Qin Guan had made the top class without any trouble, while Fang Pingping had cheated smoothly. When the school had announced the score list, Qin Guan had laughed for quite a while.

Fang Pingping had gotten into the art class, which was a far cry from ordinary classes. The boy who had showed her his papers had also gotten in the same class.

According to Qin Guan's later observation, the boy had originally been in the art class. He had just exaggerated his score to show off to the beautiful girl. For half the semester, he had been held in disdain by goddess Fang. Finally, he had been recommended for admission to a music college because of his excellent skill in playing the violin. You want to know his school scores? Ha, ha, ha... Please allow the boy to maintain some dignity.

Qin Guan took another bite of the ice cube. On the screen, Fang Pingping's cheeks were still round. She looked no different than she had in his past life.

Fortunately, her face was fine. I wonder if she has had the same experiences as in my past life.

Qin Guan was gloomy. The memory of his past life was blank. He had only gained great looks.

That was why he had ignorantly confessed his love for Cong Nianwei in this life. He didn't know whether he would have done something as silly with Fang Pingping if he had entered the same classroom again.

Qin Guan had avoided such affairs before. He owed his complete change to Cong Nianwei's rejection. Actually, that was wrong. Qin Guan was innocent. What the guy in his past life had done had had nothing to do with him. It seemed like an incomplete spirit had been mended through his rebirth.

So, what was the reality? Qin Guan was confused. He knew nothing about space physics. Forget it. I'm living well. It was important to have a new life this time around, wasn't it?

But why was he concerned about Fang Pingping's face then? Their second contact in Qin Guan's past life had been during an ordinary day at school. Qin Guan had been on his shabby bike, riding down along the slope outside the school as usual. Zhou Jing and Li Jian had been making jokes at him. Suddenly, they had seen Fang Pingping on the back of her father's motorbike, leaving the entrance of the school.

As the motorbike had been running down the slope, it had been

stopped by a passing minibus, which had been slowly driving away. The motorbike had gotten out of control.

Inertia in combination with its accelerating speed had caused it to fall down the 30-degree slope. Her father, who had been in the front, had slid to the ground, while Fang Pingping had been thrown away, finally stopping after several clumsy rolls on the slope.

All the students had been astonished. They had never seen such a thing before. They had all gotten off their bikes to check on them. There had been no cell phones back in 1995, so several students had run to the school for help. They had been in panic, when suddenly Fang Pingping's father had climbed off the motorbike.

It had been miracle. He had only seemed to have several bruises on his skin. He had moved the motorbike jerkily and walked unevenly towards his daughter.

Fang Pingping had been better off than her father. She'd had dirt all over her body, and her arms had been slightly hurt, blood trailing from them in lines. Before her father could ask any questions, Fang Pingping had suddenly covered her face with both hands and felt it up and down. Then she had cried, "Daddy, daddy! Is there anything wrong with my face? Is there anything wrong with my face?" Her father had remained speechless before his vain daughter.

## Chapter 65: Everything Is Ready

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Qin Guan and his friends had thought Fang Pingping's hair was a mess. She had been dirty and grey from head to toe. Only her amorous eyes had still been shining. She had originally been a picture of heartbreaking beauty, yet now she'd had something funny about her.

They had held back their laughter for fear of being beaten by her fans. (Stop pretending. You three had also been her fans.) Her father had looked at her without a word as Fang Pingping had cried sadly, "I can't go to the Xie Jin Film College now. I wanted to be actress. What will I do?"

Her father had just remembered and comforted her by touching her head. "My silly girl, there's nothing wrong with your face. Your tears are all over it. Do you feel any pain? Do you feel any scars on your face?" Fang Pingping had suddenly realized that her face was not hurting. She had settled down before she'd started hurting all over her body. Her bruises had been bleeding.

The surrounding boys had felt pity at the pouting, teary-eyed Fang Pingping. Quite a few boys had remained there until the police had arrived. They had been too reluctant to leave. The three boys, including Qin Guan, had not been as loyal. They had left right after ensuring Fang Pingping's safety.

Qin Guan had the last bite of the ice cube. Fang Pingping's cheeks looked smooth on TV. No matter what had happened, she had been safe in this life. Besides, she had become popular after the TV series "Princess Pearl". She could be the heroine of a terrible TV



series now.

Qin Guan was thinking about this happily when someone knocked on his door. He got off the couch to open it. Li Jian entered sweating, followed by Zhou Jing.

They both changed into slippers and sat down on the couch. Each of them had an ice-cream in hand. After taking an enjoyable bite, they screamed, "Fang Pingping!" Qin Guan stopped them, "Shall we get to business?" Li Jian let out a long, relieved breath. "I settled everything. The wholesale could be at least one box."

"The umbrellas were gathering dust in storage. We could take them away along with the glass counter," Zhou Jing said.

Qin Guan turned to Li Jian, "You can ride my tricycle home today and bring the frozen suckers to the beach. I'll borrow a larger tricycle from my cousin's factory. Tomorrow we'll work separately."

"Li Jian, you should carry the frozen suckers from the wholesale store. Remember to bring a cotton quilt to cover them, or they might melt on the way."

"Zhou Jing and I will take the freezer to the Bureau of Retired Veteran Cadres to move the umbrellas and the counter to the beach."

"That's all for today. Dismissed!" Qin Guan patted them on the

back to tell them to go. They both lay on the couch though, refusing to leave. "We're hungry, Qin Guan. It's afternoon and we haven't even had lunch yet."

You're blaming me for not having lunch? Qin Guan went to the kitchen helplessly and shouted, "Nothing delicious here. There are only vegetable noodles left. Take it or leave it, it's up to you."

Li Jian answered at once, "Add an egg, please."

"I want one, too!" Zhou Jing shouted.

Qin Guan sighed, took three eggs from the fridge and returned to the kitchen.

He had lived in the capital as a bachelor for many years. To avoid take-away food, he'd had to get good at cooking.

First, he peeled the green Chinese onion and broke off a piece of it with his hands. Then he sliced it and took a tomato and a handful of spinach from the basket. He cut them into small pieces, poured oil in the pan, and fried all the raw materials. He waited until the tomato slices had become a little soft, and then he kept stirring them with a little soy. Finally, he poured water into the pan until it was half-full.

He fried the eggs in another pan until they were 80% done and waited for the water to boil. He put a handful of thin dry noodles in the boiling water, threw the spinach in, and added some

aginomoto and salt.

The noodles were done. Qin Guan took three large bowls out and separated all the noodles and soup into three equal parts. Then he added the three fried eggs, and the noodles were ready.

Although his friends complained about having hot soup in such hot weather, the noodles were quite delicious. They both left as soon as they'd finished their food, sweating quite a lot.

It was sunny the next morning. Qin Guan rode a large tricycle, carrying the freezer, a wiring board, some clothes hangers, swimsuits, and swimming rings to the Bureau.

Zhou Jing had already moved three umbrellas and a glass counter at the entrance of the Bureau. They loaded everything onto the tricycle and set off for the first swimming beach.

It was early in the morning, so the ticket booth was still empty. Qin Guan took the long wiring board to the power supply in the ticket booth. He plugged in the board, put the small freezer at the back of the counter and threw a small purse on it. Zhou Jing opened a large umbrella over the counter and put the other two swimming rings at the foot of the wall. Qin Guan stuck the hangers into the sand before the counter. There were swimsuits and pants on them. One for adults and one for kids, a pair of boxer shorts, and done!

Everything was ready except for the frozen suckers. Not long after, Li Jian arrived on the small tricycle. He opened several boxes

of frozen suckers under the quilt in his tricycle. There were two boxes of Changsheng milk cubes at the price of 30 yuan per box. The price for wholesale was 0.9 yuan per piece, while the retail price was 1.5 yuan.

There were also red bean frozen suckers, green bean and haws. There were 60 suckers in one box, and two boxes of Changsheng orange soda under them.

It was so considerate of Li Jian. That little fatty! They put all the frozen suckers in the freezer in a hurry. Qin Guan looked up at the sky and put ten bottles of soda in the freezer as well.

The sun was rising, and the temperature at the beach was getting higher and higher. The sea water was warm under the sunshine. Just before the hottest time of the day was the best time for swimming.

Lots of people had come to the beach. There were students on vacation, adults with their kids, and some tourists. They all saw the new stand, and some of them walked up to it curiously to have a look. Qin Guan and his friends got ready to serve the customers. The visitors were surprised to see the frozen suckers.

## Chapter 66: Business On The Beach And Delicious Dishes

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People always left package papers hanging on a small shelf to show others what kind of frozen suckers the stand sold. Li Jian had gotten a small shelf like that from a wholesale merchant and hung the packages on it.

The customers turned their eyes to the swimsuits. "These swimsuits look so nice." A young girl walked to the shelf to feel the material of the suits. "Ah, it's seersucker. It's the most popular style this year. I haven't bought it in time." Then she asked them surprisingly, "Are there any other styles?" Qin Guan pouted at Zhou Jing, "Serve the lady."

Zhou Jing hastened to take out all the swimsuits from the bag as he began to talk about them, "Look at this one, isn't it bright?" Meanwhile, Li Jian was selling soda water. "Hey, young man, are you thirsty? Have a bottle of water. Thanks, it's one yuan per bottle. Take it."

Qin Guan introduced the swimming rings to the swimmers, "No matter the size, they all cost 5 yuan per hour. The deposit is 20 yuan. All the rings are made of rubber, and they're absolutely safe."

When the wave of visitors had finally left, Li Jian had sold five bottles of soda water, earning a profit of 2.5 yuan, Qin Guan had rented two circles and an umbrella, earning a 60 yuan deposit, and Zhou Jing had sold a swimsuit and a pair of three-corner pants, earning a 42 yuan profit. It was a good beginning.

It was a busy day with many small deals. They sold soda water and frozen suckers now and then. Y city hadn't been developed at the time. There was no massive flow of customers like there would be in the future, when the people on the crowded beach would look like dumplings in boiling water. The whole day, they had sold four swimsuits for ladies, which had been their best sale, four suits for kids and two pairs of swimming trunks for men.

They had made a 198 yuan profit from the swimsuits, 130 yuan from renting the rings, and 38.4 yuan from the soda water and frozen suckers. All the soda water had been sold out. It seemed that the frozen suckers, which were the most popular among the tourists, made the least profit. They were still the key to attracting customers though. It was better than nothing, wasn't it? Their total profit for the day was 366.4 yuan, which made Zhou Jing and Li Jian quite happy.

They deposited the freezer, swimming rings and umbrellas in the ticket booth before leaving and gave the woman 10 suckers as a gift for her kid.

They returned home happily. Even though they lacked experience, the soda water had been sold out by noon. They'd have to buy more for next time.

The next morning, Zhou Jing would make the replenishments and give the money to his aunt. They needed more half-length suits. Both the half-length suits selected by Qin Guan had been sold out.

It was just the beginning of July. Peak time for touring would be in middle July. Many tourists within the province liked to enjoy a leisurely holiday on the beach of Y city, so it would be the best time for sales.

The rings were enough for now. They would double them by the middle of July though. It was worth reusing them at the price of 10 yuan each.

They also had to get three deck chairs the next day. They could rent them to anyone who was interested or lie on them themselves. After a whole day of standing, Qin Guan's legs felt stiff, and so did his friends'. Delighted by that day's harvest, they rode the tricycle to the urban area under the moonlight. They hadn't eaten the whole day. Dinner was of great importance.

They planned to have a good meal at the Mother Wang Wonton Pancake Restaurant.

People said that the stomach was just like a pocket and the mouth was like a hometown. All the flavors tasted during one's childhood, sour, sweet, bitter and spicy, were the original elements of their life. Like their genes, they would accompany them till the end of their life. Both in Qin Guan's past and present life, wonton and pancake would always remind him of the fragrance between his teeth and cheeks.

The Mother Wang Wonton Pancake Restaurant was a small restaurant in a hutong of the residential area. Under the small shop sign, there were the characters for "pancakes" and "wonton" on the door and windows. The cooking counter was outside the

restaurant. There were only three tables in the room, which could sit more than ten customers. The owners were a mother and son, who were both kind and polite to customers. Despite the simple conditions, the prices were quite reasonable, so the place was popular among students and workers in the area.

When they arrived, they said hello to the boss, parked their tricycle, and entered the room. They asked for one bowl of wonton and two pieces of pancakes each, plus a dish of cucumber in sauce.

The dishes were served fast. Soon, two bowls of hot wonton were on the table. The bowls were made of high-end, blue-white porcelain. With their extremely thin skin and little pork, the wontons looked like crystal. There was a layer of bright yellow egg, as well as chopped green onion and caraway floating on the surface of the soup. The boss had scattered several drips of sesame oil and pepper powder on the soup before serving it to increase the customer's appetite.

The word "pancake" referred to different things in different places. Pancakes in Y city were fried in a pan with peanut oil and chopped green onion. The most important thing about a pancake was how many layers it had. The more and softer they were, the better.

The pancakes of that restaurant were authentic. Both sides were yellow and crispy. When they hung softly from one's chopsticks, they became loose. The boys ate pancakes and cucumber to their heart's content, sweating heavily in the hot summer as they returned home happily. They had paid 5 yuan each.



With gold in their pockets, they felt no panic. Qin Guan had no idea about his wicked friends' dreams that night. He had a good dream himself. The next morning, he could still feel the aftertaste of the meal.

## Chapter 67: The First Date

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The next day, Qin Guan and Li Jian went to buy soda water, while Zhou Jing started for his aunt alone. Both their tricycles were filled with sodas. They'd bought 20 boxes, and there were 24 bottles in each box. They carried them to the beach, breathing heavily.

A new day had begun.

The gold-digging trio had felt the business impulse of the market on the beach and become the forerunners. As their profits got higher and higher, other people had also noticed the opportunity there. The organizing unit of the first swimming beach had gotten dozens of applications for stands. With delight, the director had confirmed the application of the woman who owned the ticket booth.

They decided to build a public-service spot by the road, which would be run by one person. The stands could submit applications for that. Qin Guan's stand was the only one that summer. There was little space in the ticketing booth for other stands.

Qin Guan and his friends were enthusiastic about the news. We must take advantage of it and make a good amount of money, or the woman's help will go to waste. In a few days, their profits had reached more than 600 yuan per day. Qin Guan had also received a call from Cong Nianwei, which had made him reach a new high of happiness.

It was said that good things came in pairs. Cong Nianwei would come to the beach, and the two of them would hold hands and idle around. What's more, Cong Nianwei might even wear a swimsuit.

How lucky I am! Qin Guan selected the gaudiest pair of swimming trunks from Zhou Jing's aunt. They had blue stripes on them.

The day of the date came soon. After they'd arranged the stand and put the frozen suckers in the freezer, Cong Nianwei idled over from the road.

She looked cute that day. Her ponytail was loose and tied in a small bun at the back of her head, and she was wearing a white dress with small bright blue petals. She looked very comfortable and free.

She had a large straw backpack with her, which was popular on the beach of Y city in the summer. She was also wearing a wide-edge straw hat and had a small straw sunflower pinned to her bun. She gave off a hot summer vibe.

Qin Guan had also dressed up for the date. He was in a white pure cotton T-shirt and a pair of large swimming trunks with sunflowers (Are you sure you have dressed well?), which seemed to be in harmony with Cong Nianwei's look.

Qin Guan ran forward and took her bag, welcoming her to the stand. He cleaned the deck chair carefully and invited her to sit on it. Only when she was seated did Zhou Jing and Li Jian recover

from their astonishment. "What's up with you two?" Zhou Jing's voice was high-pitched.

As he looked at his friends, Qin Guan suddenly remembered that he had never told them about his relationship with Cong Nianwei. He had only told his roommates about it.

Qin Guan felt a little ashamed in front of them. Cong Nianwei smiled at them naturally. "We're trying to get to know each other. If everything goes well, we might become a couple eventually. This is the so-called dating period."

How can you be so calm, sister? Look at the silly guy standing beside you smiling like an idiot.

Zhou Jing and Li Jian got even more upset. F\*ck! They had been such good brothers, and yet they had found out from his girlfriend. The two of them had been together for half a year before telling them.

They couldn't bear that. Qin Guan was so unreliable. He had to be punished! The two of them started fighting with Qin Guan, "You! Do you admit that you're at fault?"

"I do, I do!" Qin Guan choked out, the whites of his eyes showing.

"Tell us that you'll treat us to apologize!"

"Okay! Okay!"

They finally let Qin Guan go after robbing him of a meal. Helplessly, Qin Guan told them, "Mind our stand. Cong Nianwei's bag is on the counter. We'll go for a walk."

They nodded and waved farewell to the golden couple. Qin Guan's confession had finally succeeded. The two of them were a good match. They both felt happy for Qin Guan.

The sea in the summer was quite attractive. It felt very comfortable to walk on the hot, soft sand barefoot. Sometimes, when one entered the domain of the waves carelessly, the water would beat them relentlessly until they left again.

Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei walked along the beach. The piquant tidewater washed their bare feet gently, retreating silently and leaving small and big footprints on the sand. The sea breeze blew at a wisp of Cong Nianwei's hair before letting it fall again. Qin Guan was looking at her profile. He thought that her hair looked really elegant. He stretched his hand out to touch it unconsciously, pinning it behind the sunflower in her bun.

Cong Nianwei turned around in a daze. Her eyes were wide open. Qin Guan was amused by her cute expression. He grinned shamelessly, stretching his arm out and hooking her hand with his slim index finger before holding it. He gently pulled her closer and stared at her.

He felt his heart beat fast as their fingers were laced together. Cong Nianwei's hands were much smaller than his, and her fingers

were thin and soft. Qin Guan held her hand and pulled it up.

In a low voice, he said, "Cong Nianwei..."

"Hm?"

"Feel how fast my heart is beating." Qin Guan pressed her hands against his chest.

Cong Nianwei could feel the blood flowing in his chest and gathering in his heart, which was beating rapidly.

The beat of his heart was transferred to her fingers and travelled to her chest like an electrical current. Heat filled her chest as her heart started beating violently.

"Bang, bang, bang, bang..."

# Chapter 68: Heartbeat

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"Bang, bang, bang, bang..."

Only their heartbeats could be heard in that moment. The noise from the sea and the sound of the seagulls had both disappeared.

Qin Guan's wicked friends were watching them from the counter in the distance. "F\*ck! They're holding hands!" Zhou Jing said.

"Where are they? Where are they? Oh, I can see them!" Li Jian shouted.

"They are so shameless, I can't bear it! He put her hands on his chest!" Zhou Jing again.

"Definitely a bad move!" Li Jian said angrily.

Qin Guan's brain was operating at high speed as they looked at each other in deep affection. "This feels excellent! Shall I take it to the next level? To do it or not to do it? I'll do it! There's nothing to be afraid of!"

Taking advantage of the harmonious scene and ambiguous atmosphere, Qin Guan lowered his head slowly, staring at Cong Nianwei with deep emotion.

"F\*ck! He lowered his head. Get out of the way! Will you move

your big head? You're almost blocking them."

"Stop that rubbish. They're about to kiss! Don't disturb me, I don't talk to uncultivated people."

Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei's heads were moving closer and closer. The tall boy lowered his head gradually so their foreheads would touch. The exciting moment was finally there. Zhou Jing and Li Jian held each other's hands tightly, the veins on the backs of their hands popping out.

They were getting closer. They were touching... Qin Guan's head suddenly moved away with a bang. His approaching cheek had been hit pitilessly by Cong Nianwei's head.

Qin Guan could hear the sound of his heart breaking. He would need a band-aid for both his jaw and heart. Cong Nianwei burst into laughter at the sight of the silly boy leaning back.

Her heart was beating really hard as she touched her scalding cheeks with her hand. Her skin was still hot, and her heartbeat was violent. She hadn't meant to refuse. She had just been afraid that her heart would jump out of her mouth or her chest would be smashed by the heat as Qin Guan kept getting closer.

Cong Nianwei was terrified. She had never experienced such an uncontrollable impulse. What a simple girl! Time would teach her that this was what love tasted like.



"What happened? Ha, ha, ha..."

"He was head-butted! Ha, ha!"

Zhou Jing and Li Jian, who had watched the whole scene, were laughing from behind the counter.

"I can't bear it! Qin Guan is so unlucky! Shall we tell this story to the commissary in charge of studies in our class?"

"Better do it together!" the two friends chimed in.

Qin Guan would have known what they planned on doing from their conversation. It was a pity that he was still lost in Cong Nianwei's smile.

Had he been hit hard? The blue sky, white clouds, wide sea and white waves composed the perfect background. What made the atmosphere ambiguous was their heartbreak and finger-crossed hands.

Why did everything suddenly change just when I was about to make a move? Let's forgive Qin Guan. He was too careless to understand girls' thoughts. He couldn't do anything but look at Cong Nianwei blankly.

Cong Nianwei was a little embarrassed. Despite her nervousness, she pulled at the corner of Qin Guan's clothes with guilt.

"Are you hurt? I'm sorry!" Could you be any more sincere, girl?

Qin Guan came to his senses when he felt her pull at him. He massaged his jaw unconsciously as he replied, "I'm not hurt, I'm confused."

"Confused about what?" Cong Nianwei looked at him nervously.

"You know, just now... Do you understand?" Qin Guan was embarrassed. What shall I say? Chick, Master Qin wants to kiss you. Pucker up!

If he'd said that, his life would have ended on that beach.

Cong Nianwei was a little embarrassed as well. She swung both her hands, which were still in Qin Guan's hands. "I don't understand. Shall we keep walking?"

Qin Guan pushed all depressing thoughts out of his head and gently pressed on her soft hand before he answered, "Yes, let's go on."

They idled along the beach again. The tide was surging in the morning, bringing plenty of seaweed, small fish and shrimp to the shallow waters. The sand underwater was softer. Their feet would sink into it, leaving a set of deep footprints. Occasionally, some small crabs brought by the water would get trapped in the pits of their footprints.

As he watched the scene, Qin Guan's embarrassment was replaced by joy. He smiled at Cong Nianwei. "You are a gifted student of the Department of Architecture. Come on, let's try to make a masterpiece! This is what they call painting with the sky and earth!" (You are so uncultivated. Why did the author make you so calm?)

Cong Nianwei was interested in Qin Guan's suggestion. She picked up a cobblestone from the sand and began to paint on the parts of the beach not flooded by the waves.

Well done! The line is perfectly straight and the trapezoid is standard. This definitely explains why she's studying architecture. She's so skilful! Five minutes had passed, then ten, but Cong Nianwei wasn't done drawing yet.

Qin Guan was staring at her masterpiece in a daze, his arms crossed over his chest. It looks like a structured architectural design. So what if my girlfriend is a straight-A student? So what if she's drawing a design plan on our date? I'll wait for her.

Qin Guan was anxious, and Zhou Jing and Li Jian were quite worried. They followed the couple, hiding behind a small sand hill and burying their bodies into the sand to watch.

Li Jian asked Zhou Jing curiously, "You are closer to them. What is she drawing?"

Zhou Jing answered impatiently, "She's drawing on the flat sand.

I can't see!" How slow those two are! The sun is rising high, and the visitors are getting more and more. Soon we'll be too busy to peep at them.

Qin Guan couldn't bear it anymore. He poked at Cong Nianwei from behind. "It's not a masterpiece in my opinion." He wanted to take the cobblestone and set an example for her.

Cong Nianwei, who was drawing sincerely, was annoyed. "I'm almost finished, you troublemaker!" she answered sullenly.

"Fine."

Qin Guan stopped at once and stood beside her patiently, waiting for her last stroke.

## Chapter 69: Swimming In The Sea

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Cong Nianwei finished the picture smartly. As she stood up to hand her cobblestone to Qin Guan, she asked proudly, "What do you think? It's my latest work. My tutor assigned it as homework for mini interior design. Today I was inspired to clear my thoughts."

When he saw her excited face, Qin Guan couldn't say anything. What could I possibly say? That she has totally missed the point of dating me? That would be like pouring a bucket of cold water over her. If I say that, I'll never date her successfully in the future.

Against his will, Qin Guan gave Cong Nianwei a thumbs up and told her, "I'll draw a picture for you. You can't laugh at the work of a person who's never learned to draw though."

Cong Nianwei nodded with curiosity. She had never seen Qin Guan draw before. Qin Guan bent down to make the sand around him flat.

"Lie down!" Zhou Jing and Li Jian buried their faces in the sand. They dared not look up until Qin Guan headed in another direction.

"We were nearly discovered! Phew! We ate a mouthful of sand! What the hell is Qin Guan doing?" They both poked their heads and felt sand on their faces.

As Qin Guan was drawing on the beach with the cobblestone, a

cambered earthworm appeared on the sand. Cong Nianwei smirked unconsciously as she looked at the stupid boy.

Qin Guan drew a bow with a curving line. Then he added a second bow, forming a peach-shaped heart.

A traditional trick. Cong Nianwei's face turned red and hot. Qin Guan finished the heart and wrote his name inside it before throwing the cobblestone full force into the sea. Then he turned around and said, "My heart is in front of you for the taking." He suddenly quivered. Is that what a human being would say? I spoke too spontaneously. He stole a glance at Cong Nianwei. Huh? It's working! Cong Nianwei smiled at Qin Guan, who looked perturbed.

She walked up to the twisted heart and drew something with her white, glittering foot. A twisted small peach appeared next to the larger peach. When Qin Guan reluctantly moved his eyes from her foot, Cong Nianwei smiled back happily and held out her hand. "Understand?" Qin Guan held her soft hand and nodded seriously. "Understand!"

The two of them left the beach. Taking advantage of their absence, Zhou Jing and Li Jian ran over. As they looked at the two pictures on the beach, which had not been washed away by the waves at the time, they both expressed their doubts.

"The painting style of the two peaches is so different. It's weird."

"It's like the difference between an academic discussion and a

kindergarten doodle!" They were shocked by the peaches. The two bachelors were too bored to peep at the lovers anymore though. We'd better go run the stand.

As the sun rose, visitors came to the beach in twos or threes. Zhou Jing and Li Jian forgot to make fun of Qin Guan and got back to work.

Cong Nianwei and Qin Guan were idling on the beach. Qin Guan took a bottle of soda water with ease, opened the cap, and handed it to Cong Nianwei. Then he opened a deck chair and put it under the umbrella.

"Qin Guan, would you like to swim?" Cong Nianwei asked him out of the blue as she lay comfortably in the chair. Zhou Jing and Li Jian's ears stood on end immediately. Excited, Qin Guan asked, "Did you bring a swimsuit with you? I have some good ones here for sale."

Smiling, Cong Nianwei shook her backpack before Qin Guan. "My swimsuit is in my bag."

Qin Guan was over the moon as he nodded like crazy. "I can swim as far as the shark net!" I can still turn this date around. I love you, Cong Nianwei!

Zhou Jing and Li Jian were happy as well. Do you really wonder why? What boy does not slobber before the pictures of female beauties? Those two had a real beauty in front of them!

Cong Nianwei put her backpack on and bought a swimming ticket from the booth. Then she entered the changing room. Her excited boyfriend began to ransack the shelf. Shall I wear three-corner pants? No, I'll look like a conservative boy. Shall I go with boxers? This pair is too colorful and showy.

Qin Guan finally chose a simple black pair of swimming trunks. Zhou Jing shouted from beside him, "Great! Another pair is sold. Thank you, Qin Guan, for supporting our business!"

Qin Guan kicked Zhou Jing with his foot. Holding the swimming trunks, he greeted the woman in the booth and went in the men's room to change. He took all his clothes off fast, changed into the swimming trunks and went outside.

Not long after, Cong Nianwei walked out of the changing room. She was wearing a conservative one-piece swimsuit with a sunflower pattern. There was a petal-like lace around the cuffs, and the lower hem was a skirt made of green sunflower leaves.

Cong Nianwei had tied her hair into a bun, which was convenient for swimming. Her fine, smooth white neck was exposed, and the fitting swimsuit outlined the girl's beautiful figure.

She is a B-cup. No, they're actually bigger, but smaller than a C-cup. Qin Guan entered his wicked mode at once. As Cong Nianwei was walking towards him, the shy expression on her face made him dizzy.

Cong Nianwei stole a glance at him. She felt shier as she saw his



broad shoulders, slim waist and slender legs. Qin Guan held Cong Nianwei with a quivering hand and shouted at Zhou Jing and Li Jian behind them, "Take care of our stand!" Then the two of them rushed into the water. My girlfriend will be safe in the sea, away from other observers.

They ran happily in the sea, the waves touching their legs. It was a little bit cold. Qin Guan held Cong Nianwei as he asked her, "Have you warmed up? Watch the waves."

Cong Nianwei nodded. "Yes, I warmed up in the changing room."

His orderly girlfriend made him feel pressured. Embarrassed, Qin Guan murmured, "Wait for me to warm up."

He stood in the shallow waters with both arms on his hips, turning his head around in all four directions. His waist looked fit between his hands.

The surrounding tourists, who were playing on the sand, swimming in the sea or lying on the beach, unconsciously paid attention to the tall young man with the excellent figure.

# Chapter 70: Dog Paddling for the Win

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As someone who had grown up by the sea, Qin Guan was good at the pre-swimming warm-up. He knew how to expand his chest and hold and rotate his arms; his upper body movements were standard.

The tourists on the beach had a physical movement lesson as they feasted on the handsome young man's body.

Qin Guan finished his lower body movements, which included half-squatting and lunging, ran for a few steps, and then jumped into the sea. He dove against the tide for a few metres before emerging from the water.

He shook off the water drops in his hair as he shouted at Cong Nianwei, who was standing in the shallow waters, "Come here! I'll help you swim!" Cong Nianwei pulled a grimace before taking several steps in the sea and swimming towards Qin Guan.

Unexpectedly, she swam in a perfect butterfly stroke. Her shoulders opened to form a beautiful arc in the blue waters, a glittering, translucent spray spreading around her body. When she reached Qin Guan, she looked at him defiantly before swimming freestyle towards the deep.

Qin Guan was in awe of her. He followed her immediately. Cong Nianwei changed to breaststroke when she saw him approaching. Qin Guan didn't want to lose face in front of his girlfriend, so he followed and asked Cong Nianwei proudly, "Can you do this?"

Then he buried his head in the water, stretched his body, and started rowing with his arms and hitting the water with his legs in a silly way. Dog paddling! The technical term suddenly hit Cong Nianwei. It was really funny.

Yes, Qin Guan was dog paddling proudly before Cong Nianwei. I can't beat you at a standard swimming style, but I can at least save my dignity this way. As they swam, he told Cong Nianwei, "Watch carefully, this is not ordinary dog paddling. There are two kinds of dog paddling, actually."

Qin Guan began scooping up water with both hands instead of alternating. He looked like a giant dog as he slowed down. Excited, he said, "Look, I changed style!" Cong Nianwei sighed at her silly boyfriend. Unbelievable! She changed to freestyle, and in a short while Qin Guan had fallen behind.

He had no time to joke around. He also switched to freestyle, patting the water with his slender legs in an effort to catch up with Cong Nianwei. They swam to the shark net, racing against each other. Cong Nianwei was a little tired, but Qin Guan was still full of energy. "I can't swim any longer. You push me back," she told him.

Her words made him happy. Qin Guan tried to embrace her slim waist, but Cong Nianwei patted his hand away. "Where did you just touch me? A lady's waist is off limits! Anyway, I can hold onto you myself." Cong Nianwei put her arms on his shoulder.

Qin Guan could do nothing but swim back to the beach with effort, like an ox pulling a cart. What a sad fate!

The sun had risen to its highest point, and it was shining brightly. Cong Nianwei rested her head against Qin Guan's shoulder. The sea was shallow, and the water was so clear that people could see the bottom. Several fish with colourful tails swam across the surface of the water, their silver dorsal fins glittering.

As she was enjoying the beautiful scene at the bottom, Cong Nianwei suddenly patted Qin Guan on the shoulder. She pointed at the bottom and shouted, "Crabs!"

Qin Guan was confused. There were so many small crabs in the shallow waters that one could find a whole group under a stone. It was nothing surprising. When he bent his head down though, he was surprised to find two crabs bigger than his palms at the bottom.

They were in the shallow waters, where the undercurrent turned over the earth where the crabs were hiding. One of the crabs was crawling slowly on its three pairs of legs while another was digging in the sand hastily, trying to find a hiding place.

Qin Guan perked up at once. He asked Cong Nianwei to float there and wait for a while. Then he took a deep breath and plunged head-first into the water. Soon the water was stirring the sand. Qin Guan resurfaced not far from there.

Cong Nianwei thought the crabs might have escaped in the

meantime, but Qin Guan grinned at her and held up his hands, holding a big crab in each one. Their bellies were right between his fingers.

Other swimmers around them shouted in surprise at the scene and started looking down at the bottom one after the other. Cong Nianwei followed Qin Guan to the beach with a smile.

Zhou Jing and Li Jian were shocked. How can they can catch such big crabs while they're on a date? This is bullying! If they're so lucky, why don't they go fishing in the ocean?

Qin Guan could guess what they were thinking by their expression. He tied the crabs with a nylon rope he took from the counter and told Cong Nianwei, "Take a shower. It's uncomfortable after swimming."

Cong Nianwei nodded, took her bag and handed her ticket to the old woman before entering the ladies' changing room. Qin Guan took an empty plastic box that used to hold soda to scoop up some seawater and throw the crabs in. Then he told his friends, "I'll take a shower, too. I'll help you later."

There were no customers at the time. Zhou Jing and Li Jian's mouths watered at the sight of the crabs. Although crabs were relatively small in July, those two were quite large and fresh. They were just imagining how they would eat them when Qin Guan came back. His hair was dripping with water because he hadn't taken a towel with him. Cong Nianwei gave him her towel when she came out of the bathroom. Qin Guan took it and returned to the bathroom to change out of his swimming trunks and put on

some casual clothes.

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Cong Nianwei decided to play alone. Abandoning Qin Guan, she ran to the beach without mercy. The two crabs had reminded her of beach combing, which she hadn't engaged in in many years.

The best time for beach combing was during the large spring tide, when the water retreated further at a high speed. Then sea life, especially slow shells, were left in the wet sand.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, the water began to retreat. It was not tide peak time yet. Cong Nianwei ran to the rocks in the shallow part of the sea and dug up some oysters and spiral shells with Qin Guan's small iron rake. That kind of natural delicious food could be eaten after being boiled with salt.

As the sea retreated fast, Cong Nianwei squatted down on the beach to observe the air holes. Some small bubbles would occasionally escape from them and crush on the beach. When that happened, it meant that there were fresh clams in the holes.

# Chapter 71: The New Face Model Competition

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Cong Nianwei was really happy. She poked at the small hole with the rake and discovered a clam. Clams of different kinds fell into her plastic bag. When she stood up and massaged her stiff waist, the sun had almost disappeared under the horizon. Qin Guan and his friends had already begun to clean up their stand.

With a red, sunburnt face, she bounced towards to their stand, holding the small bag of fresh clams in her hand. Li Jian sighed, "You don't need to study. You can make a living by selling seafood."

Qin Guan was concerned about his girlfriend. "Look after your burnt cheeks. Apply some oil to your face and put some ice on your skin." Cong Nianwei nodded before Qin Guan took her back home on his tricycle.

Cong Nianwei divided her harvest into two parts and shared it with Qin Guan. Then she waved goodbye at her boyfriend and ran into the building happily. In case you're wondering why she hadn't shared with Zhou Jing and Li Jian as well, they were not her friends. Who cared about them? They had both left the beach unhappily.

That evening, the two families had a feast of clam noodles and fried spicy crab meat.

Cong Nianwei didn't show up the next day, as her skin had been

slightly burnt. In 1999, using sunscreen hadn't been widespread, and her straw hat hadn't been enough to protect her from the sun. She stayed at home for a week to let her skin heal.

At the end of July, inspired by Cong Nianwei, the boys started selling small fishing baskets and iron rakes at their stand. They were traditional and very popular among the tourists, and they earned them a small profit. At the end of July, their personal income had exceeded 3,000 yuan. After mid-August, when Qin Guan left, Zhou Jing and Li Jian's profits would get even higher.

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Hosted by the China Art Photography Association, the China Figure Photography Association, and the New Face Education and Media Company, the New Face Model Competition was a national competition for new models. The participants were models who had been trained by a professional model organization (including college students majoring in fashion design). It was a comparatively professional competition for new models, and could be classified as a domestic B+ competition.

Sister Xue took that competition very seriously. She called Qin Guan every day in August, which annoyed him to end. She was getting more and more rude on the phone, which eventually made him decide to return to college in advance to get prepared.

As soon as he returned to the capital, he met Professor Li and Sister Xue. First, Sister Xue had to teach him the basic rules of the competition. I can't send him to the competition blindly. She made an introduction, holding a guild book in her hand. "The



competition includes a local mass-election, a local final, a national quarter-final, and a national final."

The competition seems quite long. Qin Guan was a little hesitant. Sister Xue could guess what he was thinking, and she patted the material in her hand. "The local finals will be finished within the semester, and the national quarter-final and national final will be held in the capital. The competition is not full-time. You can only show up when necessary, so you won't need to skip any classes."

"Besides, why are you so confident that you'll get to the national final? You need to pass from the local final first." Sister Xue ground her teeth in hatred. So many green hands were itching for a chance to try, and this guy was playing hard to get.

Sister Xue opened the material and resumed reading, "Age limitation: women have to be under 22, and men have to be under 24. Height requirement: women have to be over 170 centimeters tall, and men have to be over 180 centimeters tall. All participants should be healthy both physically and mentally. They should have a slim figure and a nice face. Basic skills for performing on a T stage and before a camera are required."

"You meet all the requirements. Fill the application form in and give me a copy of your ID. I'll prepare the photos and background material for you." Qin Guan nodded and stood up to take the application form. Suddenly, Sister Xue seemed to recall something. "Do you have any talents?" she asked.

Qin Guan was taken aback. "What kind of talents?"

"Singing, dancing, playing instrumental music... Anything will do. Forget it, it's nothing important. You won't need to think about it until the national final." Sister Xue shook her head hopelessly.

"Does dancing socially count?"

Sister Xue was slightly surprised. "Fine. I'll find a tutor for special training before the final. You fill the form in and I'll prepare photos."

After filling in the form, Qin Guan started training hard. It was the middle of August, and the sun was shining bright above the capital. It was also the deadline for the New Face Model Competition applications. The busy assistant of the organizing committee of the local competition was deeply troubled. He let out a long breath after he filed all the forms and photos.

Several assistants knocked on the door of the office of the preliminary judges, holding thick folders of paperwork. There were four judges sitting around the meeting table. The assistants put the male and female model applications separately on the table, gave the four judges a short introduction, and left the office.

Looking at the two distinct piles of paperwork, one of the four judges said, "This is the preliminary competition. It's just a formality. We'd better work in pairs. One pair can take the male models, and the other one can take the female models."

The youngest judge touched his glasses and said, "I agree with

Professor He." The other two nodded as well. They all looked at the table again. Professor He pulled the thickest pile over, flipped over several pages and smiled. "These are the female models. Here are the statistics. There are 286 applications from female models and 82 from male models."

He pushed the paperwork back naturally and turned to the pile of the male models. He pulled them over and told the others, "Don't blame me for taking advantage of my seniority. I'm old and I'm short on energy. I will be the judge for the male models."

The other three cursed silently, "That old fox."

Being a preliminary judge was a hard and unrewarding job.

# Chapter 72: The Preliminary Competition

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Professor He was the senior editor of "Models" periodical, and he was currently waiting for retirement, lacking any motivation.

The youngest judge was a member of the China Figure Photography Association, who had been sent as vanguard. The other two were an assistant advertising director and a costume institute assistant. Both of them had been paid to be there.

After the preliminary competition, the judges would all be VIPs, much more important than them. All four of them were coolies, so the less work there was, the better it was for them.

The last two judges picked up the paperwork of the female models gloomily. They had to get familiar with it. Professor He and the young photographer were in charge of the male models. They hastened to number the paperwork, thus ending their work for the day.

On August 14th, 1999, a sunny Saturday, Qin Guan would participate in the preliminary competition. Sister Xue picked him up from university early and drove him to the competition site.

The competition would be held at a modelling school. Two training halls with T stages would temporarily serve as the site of the competition. Following the signs, they found the male model reception soon enough. An assistant sitting behind a desk asked routinely, "What's the name of the contestant?"

"Qin Guan."

Pointing at the name list, the assistant checked them one by one. "Here it is. Qin Guan is No. 21. Take your label and clip it on your clothes before you get on the stage."

"Models have to bring their outfits and change backstage. All unauthorized personnel has to wait outside. When the judges call your number, you can get on the stage. Any questions?"

Qin Guan shook his head. It was all clear. The assistant called the next contestant forward. Sister Xue pulled Qin Guan aside and handed him the package with his clothes. Before leaving, she advised him, "Don't be nervous. Just show them what you've learned in your lessons. Cheer up!"

Qin Guan smiled brightly. "I may be a lot of things, but I'm not nervous. Relax!" Then he waved at Sister Xue and headed backstage.

The furniture backstage was pretty simple. Several folding chairs were scattered around randomly. The contestants put their bags down on the floor and began to change. There were bare chests, backs and legs everywhere. The standards for the preliminary competition were simple. Figure condition (including weight, height, chest, waist and hips measurements, shoulder breadth, and breadth ratio of shoulder and hips) and beauty evaluation (including talent, wit, appearance, skin, posture and health).

To make it simple, on the first pass, they would compete on face

and figure. As soon as Qin Guan took off his T-shirt, everyone in the room fell silent. Another strong opponent. By the time he had changed into his swimming trunks behind the curtain, there was nobody left around him.

Nobody wanted to be near him for fear of comparison. Fortunately, they would be competing one by one. At the local finals, when there would be a group show at the beginning, the contestants standing next to him would most likely want to die.

The models backstage were getting more and more, when the two judges under the stage were finally ready. Professor He picked up the material casually and had a short discussion with the young photographer on his right. Then he nodded at the assistant on the site, indicating that the competition could begin.

Bright music started playing as the host announced, "Contestant No.1, Li Xiaoguang is up, and contestant No.2 Wang Shuang should be getting ready."

Professor He and the young photographer pulled the material of contestant No.1 over. His height and weight were stated clearly on the form. They didn't pay attention to his professional background. They looked at the swimwear show on the stage instead. It was a model competition, so the models' figures had to be attractive to the audience.

Contestant No.1 had walked up to the most important part of the T stage. His gait was steady and his basic skills were perfect, but he might have chosen the wrong audience. Both judges engaged in print media and photography and focused on appearance.

"A little too wide around the hips."

"That's right. According to the theory of human body proportions, he's a little too tall. If he was as tall as an ordinary person, he would have been gourd-shaped."

"So, fail?"

"Fail."

They drew a cross over No.1's application and threw it in the rejected pile. The contestant had just returned backstage without the slightest idea that he had been disqualified so soon.

"Contestant No.2 is up, and No.3 should be getting ready..." Contestants got on the stage one by one as the host announced them. The two judges kept commenting non-stop.

"He seems to have a good figure."

"No, Professor He. Look at his muffin-like face. He has no angles. He won't look hot in the future."

"But it's only a preliminary competition. We have to select 30 contestants for the final. Let's not be too strict right from the beginning."

"Fine, let's decide about him later. If there aren't enough good contestants, he can pass."

"Okay." The application was thrown in the undecided pile.

When contestant No. 20 returned backstage, the host finally announced Qin Guan's number. "The following contestant is No.21, and his name is Qin Guan. No.22 should be getting ready."

Qin Guan looked back, smiled at contestant No.22, who was one meter away from him, and turned around to get on the stage. His smile made No.22 feel quite depressed. He's bullying me! Why do I have to compete after him?

No. 22 was a promising young man working with the New Silk Road Agency. Although he had just signed a contract, he had taken the lead among plenty of new male models because of his angled face and outstanding performance. His agent, who was also his oldest cousin, was confident about his future. He was participating in the competition to get an award.

Everyone knew that a small domestic prize could raise a model's level. A B-level could definitely be achieved, and any model could benefit from a professional status and have clients pursuing them.

No.22 had been proud of himself. Who would have known that Qin Guan would destroy his dream. He should have been a white horse. A black horse burst in unexpectedly, while a white horse barely displayed its strength.



While No.22 was feeling gloomy backstage, Qin Guan had gotten to the most important part of the T stage. The two judges were looking at him in shock.

"Is he a green hand, Chen?"

"Maybe, but he looks familiar."

"His figure is no worse than that of renowned models in our magazine."

"I know who he is, Professor He. He was a model who worked with one of the top ten photographers in our figure photography competition. That's why he looked familiar. His photos were perfect, they won the photographer the prize."

# Chapter 73: Arch Enemies

---

Professor He looked at Qin Guan's application. He is 186 centimeters tall. (Qin Guan had grown by 1 centimeter in half a year). Not that tall, more like average height. He is 19. Huh? He's studying at the Capital University of Finance and Economics, not at a modelling school. I should pay attention to him. Who said that models are not educated? Here is an exception.

The photographer called Chen watched Qin Guan walk until he reached the backstage. "Look at his figure! He's the perfect human. His shoulders, waist and hips are all perfect. Maybe I can invite him to work with me on my next project."

Professor He pushed the photographer to recall him back to reality. "Let's talk about the competition first. Pass?"

Chen nodded heavily. "Definitely pass!"

As No. 22 walked out holding his head high, He and Chen looked up and had a discussion.

"He looks fine, but something's off about him."

"Compared to No.21, his legs are shorter, his waist is thicker, and his feet and head are bigger."

No. 22 walked forward with tears on his face. My dear judges, could you lower your voices? I can hear you in this large, empty

room. I'm so depressed!

His fate had been decided before he'd turned around.

"Generally speaking, he is fine compared to the rest."

"There is nothing special about him. I can't decide. He's a maybe."

A good young man, who would have normally passed to the next stage of the competition, had his application ruthlessly thrown into the undecided pile because of Qin Guan. No. 22 went backstage in low spirits. The first thing he saw was Qin Guan, who was putting on his pants.

He walked towards him angrily with narrowed eyes. The charged atmosphere immediately attracted the surrounding models' attention.

"No. 22 is looking for trouble with No. 21."

"Why?"

"He was just unlucky enough to get on the stage after No.21."

"Wow!"

The onlookers watched the two of them meaningfully.

Qin Guan fastened the buttons on his jeans. Putting on his T shirt, he asked, "What's the matter?"

No. 22 glared at him. "Where are you from?"

Qin Guan answered automatically, "Y city."

"I'm asking about your agency!"

"New Silk Road."

"Impossible!" No. 22 exploded. "I work with New Silk Road, and I have never seen you before!"

The gossip-loving audience grew even more excited.

"What's going on? They're from the same agency?"

"Possibly. They don't know each other. It's an internal conflict."

No. 22 was quite agitated. Qin Guan said one word slowly, "Subordinated."

No.22 was so angry, his lungs seemed about to explode. That man is so annoying!

If Qin Guan was new at New Silk Road, No. 22 would have avoided him in the competition. He happened not to be in the system, so they would have fought with their gloves off. He had made a promise to his agent that he would become the champion in the local final easily. What now though? No. 22 felt a little fatter, as if he had swallowed his promise.

Qin Guan arranged his clothes in his bag, walked past No. 22 and asked an assistant, "Can I leave to get some rest when the competition is over? When will the results be announced?"

The assistant answered carefully, "On the same day. When the competition is over, the contestants can go wherever they like. They can just come back here and check the results. The contestants who pass the preliminary competition will be informed about the local final by the organizing committee with a notice. All they have to do is attend the final on the date and address stated in the notice."

The rules were clear. Qin Guan nodded and got ready to leave with his bag.

No. 22, who had been openly ignored, shouted angrily at Qin Guan like an aggressive rooster, "You have no manners! I was talking to you! Why aren't you paying attention? Actually, I'm also a New Silk Road model. I'm your predecessor! These days people don't respect their predecessors!"

No. 22 was getting more and more agitated. He had been

ashamed into anger, and his confidence had been hurt. He was waving his arms around, looking even more like a rooster.

Qin Guan sighed helplessly as he put his bag on his back. Those young men can hardly control their temper. (Please, your actual age is 19.) He shrugged at No. 22 with open arms and said without any sincerity, "Hi, predecessor." Then he added, pouring oil on the flames, "So?"

So? F\*cking so! No. 22 was about to explode when Qin Guan went on, "Any questions? In any competition, we depend only on results. Manners maketh a man, as you said yourself just now."

No. 22's heart was pierced by his words, as if a bucket of cold water had been poured over his head. His liver was quivering. Shaking, he looked like he was about to say something. Before he could find the right words, Qin Guan walked out, leaving him alone in the empty backstage area like a clown surrounded by his audience.

No. 22 looked left and right, picked up his bag and ran into the fitting room quickly. He was still in his swimming trunks. You bastard, wait and see! I'll make you die!

Qin Guan was quite relaxed. The competition had been more casual than he had imagined, which had fit his taste well. Sister Xue stood nervously in the corridor outside. She felt relieved as soon as she saw Qin Guan walking out with a relaxed expression.

Qin Guan gave her a summary of the future arrangements and

told her about the farce with No. 22 backstage.

Sister Xue sneered, "Don't worry about him. Just prepare for the following competition. That guy can't handle you. If he's plotting something, he will regret it."

Qin Guan was curious about her confidence. "Why? Sister Xue, are you a Mafia boss? Have I fallen under your protection by accident?"

Sister Xue poked at his head. His behavior had once again not lived up to her expectations. "You bastard! I've told you time and time again to pay attention to the modelling profession, but you don't listen to me. Professor Li is your boss!"

"Professor Li?"

"Definitely Professor Li!"

"Is she a tutor at the Capital Institute of Fashion Technology?"

Sister Xue was so angry that she burst into helpless laughter. She patted Qin Guan on the back hard. "A tutor? You have been her student for so long! Is that the only thing you know about her?"

Bang, bang, bang, bang...

Qin Guan got beaten again.

## Chapter 74: Oh! Powerful!

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"Ah! My bad, my bad! Stop, Sister Xue, it's hurting!" Qin Guan pretended to be in pain.

Sister Xue sighed and said, "Professor Li is not just a tutor at college, but also one of the first official models in China, the current Vice Director of the China Model Association, and a standing counsellor of the National Model Promoting Department. Many renowned models used to be her students, including Zhai Qing and Ming Ming."

Qin Guan's mouth opened wider and wider. I have trained with Professor Li for such a long time, and she has shouted at me every day. Who could image that that serious old lady could be so influential in the modelling circle?

Cold sweat ran all over Qin Guan's body as he recalled his behaviour. I might be the most unreliable student she has had in her whole life. When Sister Xue finished speaking, she got lost in thought. Qin Guan is Professor Li's treasure. He is talented, fit, and intelligent. All models dream of having his appearance, and Professor Li is sure of his inner talent, yet he only considers this profession a part-time job. The comparison is odious!

Sister Xue came back to her senses and drove a shocked Qin Guan back to college. He needed to relax after the competition. Sister Xue drove back to the competition site and waited there until the afternoon. The organizing committee announced the local finalists after the preliminary competition.



As expected, Sister Xue found Qin Guan's name at the top of the list. She took the notice for the final with joy and called Qin Guan. "Hello, this is Sister Xue. You passed! What? What are you talking about? Donkey meat in baked wheaten cake?"

Qin Guan expressed his pleasure before making an unreasonable request. Sister Xue had to send the notice to his college and bring him dinner from a nearby restaurant.

The donkey meat restaurant in the Zaojunmiao residential area was a small shop less than 200 metres away from Qin Guan's college. People queued up there to buy baked cakes with donkey meat.

The meat was boiled with spices in a large cauldron, and the recipe was a secret. Their baked wheaten cake was even more famous. It had layers thinner than paper, and it was crisp, flavoured, and soft in the mouth.

Sister Xue queued up breathlessly and fought to get two cakes and a bowl of donkey meat for Master Qin. He had to be served like a king. Fortunately, he had no requests besides delicious food. Qin Guan finished the donkey meat feast, read the notice carefully and lay in bed in satisfaction. He soon fell asleep. (He was so tough.)

It was Monday August 16th, 1999. Sister Xue and Qin Guan arrived at the site for local final early. There were a lot less contestants this time. 30 female models and 30 male models had gathered at the competition site. Backstage, a casual cloth curtain prevented them from seeing each other.

There were less people around this time, so assistants and agents could accompany them. Naturally, Sister Xue entered the backstage as Qin Guan's assistant. According to the arrangement of the organizing committee, they had to find the dressing team backstage. During the first round, they would show their personal accomplishments, and during the second round, Qin Guan would have to work with a female model who had the same number as him. They would show a group of outfits and equipment. Then it would be time for the judges to decide.

The local final procedure was not that complicated. The key to qualifying was cooperating with the female contestants and choosing the right outfit and equipment. The male models would choose their outfits first, as their suits were comparatively simple. Then female models would choose outfits that matched their partners' choices. That was why the ladies were nervous. Their fate was in the hands of strangers.

Sister Xue found a matching suit and gown on the hangers. Among all the strange outfits, that set was the most beautiful one. Before she could touch them though, a man squeezed in from the side and hit her with his shoulder.

He caught the matching suit and gown in his hand. Sister Xue was angry. She used to be a heroine in the hutongs of the capital. Nobody could match her! Who dared steal something from her hands? She seized the thief's shoulder and reproached him, "Take a turn!"

"Oh, my! It hurts! I'm going to die!" The man's face filled with

tears.

At the sight of his face, Sister Xue released his shoulder as if she had touched something nasty. She took three steps back and kept a distance of one metre from the thief.

The man's eyes shined like a 1000-watt bulb when he saw Sister Xue. He rushed at her, howling excitedly, "Miss Xue, my darling! I missed you so much! Why didn't you contact me? My heart was missing you dearly."

Qin Guan touched the fine hair on his body and took one step back silently.

Sister Xue failed to escape from the man's attack. A living human was actually hanging from her body.

"Let me go, Sissy Ou! Let me go! Are you deaf?"

The more he hugged her, the more the man wouldn't let go. Sister Xue pressed her hand hard against his face for fear that he would be pasted on her permanently.

"No, no, I won't let you go! Last time you said you'd call me, I waited for several years. I never got a call from you. You're so heartless." Sissy Ou rubbed his face on Sister Xue's palms as he spoke. "You conscienceless girl! My name is Ou Qiang, the most masculine Ou Qiang!"

Qin Guan burst into laughter at his name. Ou Qiang? Oh, powerful? [1] Seeing the murderous expression in Sister Xue's eyes, he covered his mouth and went to laugh in the corner.

Sister Xue had business to do. She didn't have the time to chat with Sissy Ou. She stretched her hand out to him and said, "Gimme!"

As he looked at the clothes and Sister Xue, Ou Qiang hesitated. Suddenly, a voice was heard from behind him, "What are you standing there for, my elder brother? Have you made your choice?" Dear me! My dearest younger cousin has come to my rescue!

[1] In Chinese, Oh, powerful? is the phonogram of Ou Qiang.

# Chapter 75: The Underestimated Military Uniform

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Ou Qiang gestured to Sister Xue and turned back to greet the man, "Hello, my handsome younger brother. I just met one of my favorite acquaintances. I'm afraid there is a conflict between us. We selected the same outfit."

The model walked up to Sister Xue and looked down. Then he cast a glance at the outfit Ou Qiang had selected for him, and nodded handsomely. "If you two are old friends..."

Before he could finish his words, Qin Guan, who was done laughing, returned.

Ou Qiang's cousin recognized Qin Guan at first sight. His attitude suddenly changed. "If you are old friends, then you should be generous. We'll kindly accept the outfit."

Qu Qiang's cousin was No.22, the model who had had a fight with Qin Guan during the preliminary competition. Qin Guan smiled at the scene. Before he could say anything, Ou Qiang introduced his cousin happily, "Oh, dear! My cousin Ou Fen is such a good talker. Ha, ha, ha... We are friends, we don't care about such trifles."

Ou Fen? Oh, Sh\*t? Ha, ha, ha! Both Qin Guan and Sister Xue burst into laughter. No. 22 looked ashamed and angry as he explained to the onlookers loudly, "I have changed my name to Ouyang Fen!" Oh, Sheep Manure? It was still sh\*t! The two of them laughed even louder.

Ouyang Fen had no idea what they were laughing about. He started pulling away his cousin angrily. Ou Qiang waved his handkerchief at Sister Xue and said, "Meet you after the competition, okay?"

Sister Xue shivered. There were few outfits left on the hangers anymore. She frowned in hesitation, but Qin Guan was resolute. Pointing to one of the outfits at random, he said, "That's it."

It was a camouflage uniform used during the military training of college students. The pants had a large crotch. Sister Xue shook her head repeatedly. "No, no. Your partner will complain. Shall we go with this one?" What she recommended was a suit with a metallic lustre.

Qin Guan shook his head. Is this even clothing? It covers no more skin than a leaf. Without further discussion, he picked up the military uniform again and said, "I'm going with this. It's a done deal."

Sister Xue burst into tears on the spot. She had nothing to say. Qin Guan was too determined to listen to her. She took the uniform and handed it to the assistant, saying torpidly, "It's for No.21, Qin Guan. And here are the clothes for the female model. Shall I give them to you?" The assistant in charge of stock nodded and pinned a No.21 tag on the women's uniform.

When all the male models had finished their selection, the assistant pushed the rolling hangers with the 30 outfits to the

changing area of the ladies. The girls surrounded her and got their outfits according to the number tags. Naturally, some were joyful, while others were worried.

"Oh, my! My little dress is so pretty," said the lucky girl who had gotten the gown.

"Look at that metallic lustre! It's so revealing! My shoulders are really broad, and this is a halter top. What a disaster!"

The surrounding girls all looked at her. The girl's skeleton is indeed large. If she wears that mini dress, she will be out of the competition! Somebody was kind enough to try to comfort her. They pointed at the military uniform and said, "At least, your clothes will show your figure to the audience. Look at that one..."

That was when they saw the camouflage uniform. A heated discussion suddenly began.

"This is the most terrible outfit in this competition!"

"Maybe the organizing committee has no financial support. Did they select that outfit at random? Thank god I don't have to wear it!"

While everyone was talking, model No.21 took the uniform calmly. That outfit had made her the underdog. Actually, Li Xiaoli was silently chuckling to herself. She was a student at the Design Department of the Institute of Fashion Technology. Her figure was

pretty good, so she had entered the modelling circle naturally.

It was said that a good actress could also be a good singer. The same actually applied to the fashion industry. Many designers failed to find a good job after graduating. By being a model, Li Xiaoli could meet many older and more experienced designers. She could learn from them, expand her public relations, and change profession when she got the chance. There were many cases like that in the fashion industry.

That was Li Xiaoli's plan. The uniform actually really matched her taste. She could modify it with her professional skills and show off her extraordinary talent during the competition. I'll also try my best to help my partner, who chose this uniform. Li Xiaoli sewed as she thought.

Meanwhile, Qin Guan had changed into his clothes for the talent show. He was wearing a rented black suit and a pair of dancing shoes he had made himself.

That's right, Qin Guan had made the shoes himself. Professor Li had thought about the regulations of the competition carefully and decided that Qin Guan's social dancing skill would not work without a partner. She had thought deeply for a long time and finally chosen tap dancing for him. It was suitable for a solo performance, and it was a dance full of enthusiasm and rhythm, which was exactly Qin Guan's style.

They had decided together on the music and tutor. When the discussion had come around to his outfit and equipment, Qin Guan had volunteered to buy the shoes himself. They had been so



expensive though! He couldn't afford to spend so much money on a pair of shoes he would only wear once, so he had made them by himself. Who would care? The special slices for tap dancing cost only 60 yuan per pair. Qin Guan had found a professional shoemaker who had nailed the slices to ordinary cowhide shoes, and that was it!

The host began to make a short introduction about the regulations and process of the competition. Then the local final of the New Face Model Competition started.

Female model No.1 got on the stage first, followed by male model No.1, and so on. The models got on the stage sequentially according to the host's announcements.

Qin Guan and Sister Xue were sitting on a bench behind the curtain, watching the show with relish. The models were singing, dancing or playing musical instruments. Those who could do nothing recited poems. They all tried their best.

Professor He and the other three judges had completed their task and retreated from the front line. The four judges were much more important this time.

## Chapter 76: The Talent Show

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The Chief Editor of "Models" Magazine was a middle-aged man with sharp eyes, and the Vice Chairman of the China Figure Photography Association was a smiling elderly man. The principal of the modelling school that sponsored the competition was a lady that still retained her graceful upbringing, and Xie Feng was a new prominent fashion designer in China.

When the host announced No.22's turn, Ouyang Fen held his head high and turned around before Qin Guan. Qin Guan still did not understand why Ouyang Fen was acting so hostile that day.

According to the order of appearance at the preliminary competition, Qin Guan was supposed to get on stage right before Ouyang Fen. Yet Ouyang Fen was No. 20 in the local final, so he was right before Qin Guan. He must have some kind of connection.

If Ou Qiang could read Qin Guan's thoughts, he would have broken into tears. When he had gotten the notice from the organizing committee, he had begged the assistant in charge of the order of appearance. He had cried on his knees for three hours to get that result.

What kind of connection does he have? Can he rig the competition despite the fact that there are so many contestants? If he really had a connection, he wouldn't need to appear first, he would just win.

Ouyang Fen performed a popular song and danced powerfully

before the judges.

He looked at Qin Guan proudly when he returned backstage.

As soon as Ouyang Fen finished his performance, the judges started talking in low voices.

"What do you think?"

"He sang well."

"His best feature are the angles on his face." It's a talent show. Could you comment on his talents, dude?

"He wasn't out of tune, and his dancing steps were correct. You can't set high standards for models." That's true for any talent show.

"He was outstanding compared to the previous contestants."

"I agree!"

"Me, too."

It seemed that the judges had liked Ouyang Fen's performance. Then they were pleasantly surprised by Li Xiaoli's ten-minute embroidery. Xie Feng decided on the spot that he would hire her as

a backstage assistant for his next fashion show.

An assistant, not a model. The news made Li Xiaoli mad with joy. This was worth participating in the contest. The award itself meant nothing to her.

As she went behind the curtain happily, the host announced in his microphone, "The next competitor is No. 21. Qin Guan will tap dance for us."

Tap dancing sounded original to the judges. They paid special attention to Qin Guan, who struck a pose on the stage. Wow! Handsome! A fitting suit! Broad shoulders and long legs. His figure was outstanding.

The music started playing. It was "Irish Etudes I". Qin Guan was going to perform a traditional Irish tap dance. It was different from American tap dancing, as the Irish dance combined art performance, elegant movements and the surprising physical agility of the dancer.

Keeping his upper body still, Qin Guan hung his hands down naturally and followed the music slowly. He was getting faster and faster as the music progressed. Tap, tap... Tap, tap, tap... Tap, tap, tap, tap... The sound hit the hearts of the judges. What a beautiful performance! It was the lively rhyme and energy that made professional dancers stand out.

The music slowly came to an end. Breathing heavily, Qin Guan waited for feedback on the stage. The judges talked in low voices.

"Who has studied dance? How was it? This dance is too niche."

"I have no idea, but it seems great. Has he studied abroad? It's really fashionable."

"It's hard to tell, but we should keep an eye on him. A good figure and a handsome face are more than enough."

"I agree."

When they finished their discussion, the Chief Editor spoke first.

"Your tap dance refreshed our experience. You showed abundant energy, which is essential for a model. During your furious dancing, your still upper body showed your control, while your smart steps showed your coordination. It was a successful performance. Congratulations."

The judges stood up and applauded Qin Guan. It was the first time in the competition that all four judges had stood up before a model. Qin Guan took a deep bow and got off the stage. Sister Xue hugged him tightly. It was the most striking performance of the whole competition. All the other models considered Qin Guan a potential rival, especially Ouyang Fen, who was grinding his teeth on the sidelines.

The first round was over by noon. After a quick lunch backstage, the second round began. While the contestants were getting ready,

the host announced the score of the first round. With a score of 9.95, Qin Guan was first.

Cursing, Ouyang Fen turned around and saw Qin Guan fasten a wide military belt around his waist and put black bandages on his arms and legs to make the giant uniform fit. Taking a deep breath, Ouyang Feng encouraged himself, "It's just ordinary camouflage clothing. I have a fitting suit. I will win this round!"

Groups of models walked on the stage from two different runways. They stood on the stage for about one minute, showing their outfits before they turned around to leave.

The judges discussed the contestants' performance and graded them.

# Chapter 77: The Winners Of The Local Final

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"They have exhibited all the flaws of the outfits. I haven't seen such a terrible performance in years."

"A bit mediocre..."

"What were they thinking? They lacked any cooperation during their performance."

There were different comments on the couples of contestants. Soon, Ouyang Fen was finished. He was quite satisfied with the performance himself. His partner was a sweet girl who had been in perfect harmony with him, and their matching outfits had looked brilliant.

The judges had reacted to their performance with a slight nod. I have observed all the details! I will fly high in the sky from now on. Qin Guan won't stop my success. I'll be the winner! Ha, ha, ha!

Ou Qiang patted Ouyang Fen on the shoulder as he was lost in his proud thoughts. Pointing at the stage, he said, "Your rival is next. Look!" Then he let out a sigh. My cousin is good from head to toe, except for his non-functional brain. I, as his elder brother, have to look out for him.

As soon as the host finished her announcement, an epic battle score started playing. Ouyang Fen saw Sister Xue hand a sniper rifle to Qin Guan before he got on the T stage. It looked like a T.C.I. M89-SR sniper rifle made in Israel. This was not the time to

discuss the type, but where had it come from?

His cousin Ou Qiang had volunteered to buy two toy guns for Sister Xue from a toy stand. The guns looked just like real ones. Yes, he had bought two, a sniper rifle and a hand gun. One for the male model and one for the female model. He hadn't forgotten anyone.

When he bragged about helping Sister Xue to his cousin, Ouyang Fen almost beat him to a pulp. While Ouyang Fen was wondering about the guns, Qin Guan had already gotten on the stage with his rifle. Li Xiaoli had gotten on the stage from a different direction, holding a toy Italy Beretta 92F handgun in her hand.

The judges off the stage grew excited at once. This round stressed on the outfits themselves, not the figures of the models. This couple had spent a lot of thought on their outfits and made extensive research in a short time. Ten points for a good first impression. When they walked closer to them, the judges were even more satisfied with their modified military clothing. Such creativity! Full marks for exhibition!

Following the music theme, the models didn't walk in a standard catwalk, but adjusted their steps to half-squat or stand inclined. They combined military movements, including holding the guns, shooting and advancing, with quick short steps on the stage. The judges enjoyed the short, one-minute show to the fullest.

"It's the most shinning couple I have seen in this competition. Not one of the best, but the best."



"Yes. They had a good idea about the outfits. They didn't change the original costumes, but they added details to increase their beauty. No rules were violated. Very clever models!" That was the designer's comment.

"Their body language and their chemistry were really good."

"They are the most serious contestants up to this point. They even found gun props themselves."

The four judges had a short discussion and then graded them. Li Xiaoli and Qin Guan walked to the edge of the stage, looked at each other with a smile and pointed their guns at one another as if they were going to shoot. "Bang!" After the sound effect, they retreated together backstage.

"Interesting!" The designer was considering copying the scene in his next fashion show.

Ouyang Fen was stunned when Qin Guan returned backstage. You didn't follow the rules. You added that move without authorization! You broke the rules, got it? The problem is that the effect was excellent! Ouyang Fen was lying back in a chair with his fingers in his hair. You didn't leave anyone a chance, Qin Guan. Wait and see... Wait and see! Ou Qiang was about to comfort his brother when he saw his state. "Oh, my dearest brother. Oh my! You have a runny nose!"

When all the models had finished their performance, they

changed into casual clothes and waited for their fate-determining scores patiently. Their current scores had been calculated, and they were as follows:

Figure-20%

Style-20%

Temperament-15%

Camera Sense-25%

Talent-20%

The host read the average marks of all the competitors one by one, allowing the models to get a general idea of their own rank.

Qin Guan's total score was still 9.95, which was the highest. Unless there was some kind of accident, he would win the competition. Poking his cousin with his finger, Ou Qiang said in a low, excited voice, "My brother, you are second. Second!"

Ouyang Fen chuckled to himself. On second thought, he felt bitter. I would have been first if it wasn't for Qin Guan.

The host started to read the list of the winners. All the models waiting backstage were listening nervously.

"First, I'll announce the top 10 female contestants. No.3 Jiang Qinqin, No.21 Li Xiaoli..."

The girls yelled in both sadness and happiness.

"It's you! Get on the stage quickly!"

"Damn... I wasn't selected."

Ten beautiful girls walked on the stage and stood in a line to show their most brilliant smiles to the audience. The host went on, "The top 10 male models are... No. 20 Ouyang Fen... No.21 Qin Guan... Please come on the stage!"

Ouyang Fen got on the stage with red eyes. Thank god my nose isn't red. The male models formed a second line along the left side of the stage. The host was about to announce the individual awards. At the sight of the list, she seemed taken aback. Is there a mistake on the list? Forget it, I'll just read it.

"The prize for the most stylish model goes to No.21 Qin Guan... The prize for the best performance on the T stage goes to Qin Guan... The most popular prize goes to Qin Guan... The best potential prize goes to Ouyang Fen (finally a different winner)... The Chief Editor of "Models'" Magazine will present the prizes to the winners!"

## Chapter 78: Shabby Rewards

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Qin Guan held three individual awards in his hands. Looking at the lonely, small diploma in his hand, Ouyang Fen felt weak both physically and mentally.

Qin Guan piled up his certificates and returned to his original position. The results of the local final would soon be announced. The host read from his card excitedly, "The third winners of the capital local final of the New Face Model Competition are No. 21 Li Xiaoli, and No.7 XXX..."

They both came on the stage to get their bouquets and certificates from the distinguished guests. Li Xiaoli was quite happy. As a green hand designer, I'm really fortunate to place third. She hadn't just won an award, but also a chance to be guided by a professional designer. Nobody could be happier than her.

"The silver medal winners are XXX, No.11 of the female group, and Ouyang Fen, No.20 of the male group." When Ouyang Fen returned with his diploma, Qin Guan grinned at him and said insincerely, "Congratulations."

F\*ck congratulations! As Ouyang Fen had expected, the host announced that Qin Guan was the winner of the male group. Qin Guan put his pile of certificates into Ouyang Fen's hands and headed for the stage. "Give me a hand, buddy. I've got too many awards."

Too many awards? I have plenty myself. You are bullying me!

And I'm not your buddy, I'm your enemy! Your arch enemy! Understand?

Smiling brilliantly, Qin Guan accepted his bouquet and diploma. The host was holding a small announcement from the Chief Editor of "Models" magazine.

Holding the microphone excitedly, she announced the good news to the models, "Dear contestants, our competition has been completed successfully. The top 10 contestants will participate in the national quarter-final, representing the capital. Of course, that's not the only good news. The following news, brought by the Chief Editor of 'Models' magazine, will surprise you all. The top three of the competition will be invited to an outdoor photoshoot of the magazine in September, the most beautiful part of autumn. The photos will be published inside the latest issue of the magazine. Aren't you excited by the news?"

"Yes!"

"Excellent!"

The contestants buzzed with excitement. Such a chance was quite big for them.

The competition ended on that happy note.

Qin Guan was frowning as he returned backstage. Sister Xue was negotiating with the staff of the organizing committee and packing

up his diplomas. She thought that there was something wrong with him, but she was too busy to ask. I'll find out later.

She got rid of Ou Qiang, packed up Qin Guan's things, arranged his diplomas and bouquet, got his first winner award and notice for the quarter-final, put the photoshoot notice away, and finally drove Qin Guan back to college in her shabby car.

It was dark and the headlights of her small Lada created a bright halo on the road. Sister Xue let out a long breath and told Qin Guan, "I know what you're thinking. Just say it. You don't want to attend the photoshoot at all."

Qin Guan nodded. "Won't it affect my courses? I'll be really busy."

Sister Xue held the steering wheel with one hand, opened the glove compartment, and searched around inside. Qin Guan pulled a wrinkled pack of cigarettes from the side of the door. He handed her the last cigarette and said, "That's what you're looking for, right? You should smoke less. You always smoke, no matter what mood you're in."

Sister Xue took the cigarette and lit it up, her eyes fixed on the road ahead. "Stop talking nonsense. I read the schedule. We'll start on Friday afternoon and shoot on Saturday. You'll be background for others. The job will be finished in half a day. I'll drive there with you, and we'll return on the same day. It won't take too long."

Qin Guan felt relieved. Then he came to the most important

question, "How much is the award for the local final?"

Sister Xue sneered, as if she had known Qin Guan would ask that question. "2,000 yuan."

"What? Only 2,000 yuan?" Qin Guan would have jumped out of his seat if it wasn't for the seat belt.

"You should be grateful. Some domestic competitions even ask the participants for money. I picked a formal competition for you. Anyway, you could make some money. How much do you expect to make with your current fame though? If you win the national final, the award will be bigger. About 10,000 yuan, I think."

All right. The total prizes will be more than 10,000 yuan. Qin Guan felt that his effort hadn't gone to waste. At the entrance of the college, he picked up his bouquet and diplomas. He took six bills from the award money and handed them to Sister Xue. "Here is your share, one third of the total amount. Take it. It's late, buy something delicious for yourself."

Sister Xue accepted the money, murmuring "nasty kid" before she got back in the car. She didn't forget to remind Qin Guan happily, "There is no term for an award share in our contract. Thanks a lot for your generous gift." Then she drove away, leaving in a wisp of smoke. Qin Guan saw her off blankly. He wanted to weep, but he failed to shed any tears. I was cheated. Where is my money?

The intense summer heat slowly subsided. Autumn came. The top 10 contestants of all the local finals gathered in the capital, and

the quarter-final of the New Face Model Competition officially began.

There were 280 contestants from 19 areas participating in the quarter-final. Only the lucky top 30 guys would qualify for the national final at the end of August. The atmosphere was tense at the competition site. All the judges for the preliminary competition had arrived.

The models needed to show up twice for the preliminary competition. Once with an optional outfit, and once with a swimsuit. Their fate would be decided by their performance.

The site for the quarter-final was much larger. There were five entrances to the main T stage. This meant that there would be five models on the T stage at the same time. It would be a test for their style and, in a sense, their luck.



# Chapter 79: The Pessimistic T Stage Show

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Comparison made a difference. While they were drawing straws to get divided into groups, several girls were so nervous that they had tears in their eyes. They were praying to have relatively weak opponents in their group.

They were divided into different groups backstage. People from the same competition area were gathered together, and people who had a better relationship stood closer. The models from the capital looked strange. Ouyang Fen stared at Qin Guan with wide eyes, while the others were far away, leaving the two of them alone in the middle of an empty space. Contestants from other areas seemed sympathetic about the situation. Better keep a distance from them. The angry guy is outstanding, and Qin Guan is a charming angel.

When they began to draw straws, they prayed that they would not be in the same group with those two. Let them kill each other. Amen! It's said that China is not influenced by foreign gods. Fine! The Jade Emperor and Buddha then...

When the organizing committee pasted the list of the groups on the white board backstage, some models were happy and others were worried. Ouyang Fen was glad to see that his number was before Qin Guan's. Excellent! Then he saw that he knew nobody in his group. Okay, I'm safe now.

A slender model in the same group as Qin Guan stared at the list for a long time. His assistant pulled at his clothes apprehensively and tried to comfort him, "Don't worry. You just need to pass to

the quarter-final. Thirty models will be selected out of 190. You still stand a good chance." The model couldn't do anything but smile at the assistant.

They had to show their number tags to get the gowns from the organizing committee. All the gowns were provided by a sponsor of the competition, Menglianna Clothing Co. Ltd. It was an exaggeration to call them gowns. The brand was overrated.

The company engaged in white-collar, urban clothing. At the beginning of the year, a designer had made an ambitious suggestion to the company. The quality of life was getting better and better, and as a result, annual meetings, evening receptions and wine parties were common events for companies. They had to follow the trend to create new ideas. After making several samples, they had collaborated with the organizing committee. They were planning to take advantage of this competition to test their new collection in the fashion circle.

They had made the gowns with cheaper materials, feeling that this was a casual clothing show, and not an evening gown show. Before anyone could complain about the outfits, the host announced on the stage, "The first group of female models can present themselves. This includes XXX, XXX... They are wearing the new autumn collection of Menglianna..."

The five models walked down the runway, surprising the judges. Is this an evening gown show or not? Aren't those casual dresses? With those dresses on, the individual ability of the models would be more important. Who would be able to make their dress look like a gown?

The models walked in groups. The eight judges had to give the basic points of their feedback in only two minutes. They were tired and dizzy. When the results of the female group were announced, they took a 15-minute break before the male group came on the stage.

If their performance was not outstanding, the tired judges would not give them a high score. Sister Xue patted Qin Guan on the back to encourage him. He was ready to go.

"Now the 16 male groups will come on the stage. It's Qin Guan from the capital..."

Music started playing. Qin Guan was wearing a business suit with light grey stripes and a tie of the same color. Someone with slightly darker skin than Qin Guan would have looked like a rat in that suit. Not a lab mouse, but a sewer rat.

Qin Guan's shining white skin took the suit to a whole new level though. When the other models came on the stage, the assistant of the organizing committee couldn't bear to look at them. They all looked like grey rats.

They were wearing grey suits with grey stripes, dots, slanting stripes, and crossings... They looked like a whole family of rats. The judges were shocked, and the whole room had fallen silent. Only the background music could be heard. Everyone was suddenly reminded of the famous animation series "Black Cat Sergeant".

What could one do with such an awful suit? Keep reading and you'll find out. The judges watched them carefully, looking for something different. The contestant on the left side, who was wearing a suit with vertical stripes, was not acting like he was wearing a hospital gown. With further observation, one would notice that the suit was actually of good quality. It hung smoothly and gave off a sense of elegant nobility. Good! The judges then turned to the four models on the right, who looked respectively like a prisoner, a grey Mickey Mouse, and so on...

Okay, let's focus on the one on the left. The judges looked at his application. He is the one that got a high evaluation in the preliminary contest. It makes sense that he is this talented, considering that he won the capital local competition.

The judges finished reading Qin Guan's application and wrote down his score before the models returned backstage. Before Qin Guan and the other models in his group could change out of those suits, Ouyang Fen jumped in front of them.

"Ha, ha, ha, what are you wearing, Qin Guan? It would be breaking news if a local winner was disqualified in the quarter-final. Ha, ha, ha! How can you compete with me?" Ouyang Fen was so happy that he lost any desire to laugh at Qin Guan when he saw the so-called gown. Whatever, my enemy is doomed to fail. I will not degrade myself so much as to talk to him.

The models wearing the same grey suit glowered at Ouyang Fen, who was really talented at irritating others. Qin Guan paid no attention to him though. He just changed into his casual clothes in

the fitting room. There would be a swimsuit round later.

Qin Gan enjoyed his lunch backstage as usual. The swimsuit competition would begin in the afternoon. Ouyang Fen suddenly realized that the swimsuits would compliment Qin Guan, who made a living on both his figure and face. F\*ck! I still have to keep an eye on this guy.

Ouyang Fen finished his swimsuit show confidently and was planning on mocking Qin Guan again. However, he was left speechless when he saw his enemy in a swimsuit. He stared angrily at him as Qin Guan shined brightly on the stage. He has slender legs and V-line abs! It's unfair! Why would god create such a man?

Qin Guan couldn't help laughing at Ouyang Fen behind the curtain. Are you kidding me? Ouyang Fen has surpassed Liu Xiaoyang and earned himself the annual award of the most childish person I know!

## Chapter 80: Bathing With An Enemy

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While Qin Guan and Sister Xue were waiting off-site for the results of the quarter-final, Ou Qiang, Sister Xue's pursuer, approached them. As he joked around with them, Qin Guan was surprised to find out that the troublesome Ouyang Fen was only 16 years old.

He was three years younger than him. As he thought of his resolute, serious face, his 184 centimeters and his broad chest, Qin Guan couldn't help but laugh loudly. That's what we called contrast-cute in my past life!

The others didn't understand what Qin Guan was laughing about. Doesn't he look ridiculous for his age? Ouyang Fen's blank expression made him look like a war hero.

The organizing committee handed out notices to the group leaders of every area, who would be in charge of informing the contestants about the results. (Actually, they had to avoid being beaten by the contestants. The task of informing was often offensive.)

The person in charge of the capital looked at the notices. 30 persons would be selected from 190 contestants, so there would be an average of two finalists from every area.

That's pretty good. There are two contestants selected from my area. As expected, it's the winner and the runner-up. He handed the notices to them first.

Sister Xue waved the notice proudly at Ou Qiang. Her IQ had dropped from hanging out with those silly guys for so long.

The final of the New Face Model Competition would take place on August 28. Qin Guan let out a long breath. That would be the final kick at the goal line. This arduous competition has cost me more than half a year!

Sister Xue smiled to herself as she saw Qin Guan off. Finally, I've gotten the child on board. This is actually a short competition. There will be more time-consuming activities in the future. I'll force him to go at knife-point if I have to.

What a ferocious woman!

The autumn sky was clear, and the air was crisp. It was still dry and hot in the capital, and that's how it was like in the waiting area of the national final site as well. After an assembled training by the organizing committee, most of the contestants had mastered the basic process of the competition.

The first round of the national final was a group performance. The boys and the girls would be standing at two different places, and they would get on the stage together to demonstrate the theme of the final: Autumn.

The lights dimmed, and the colorful lamps on the stage were lit one after the other. The digital video started playing as the host stomped on the white smoke created by dry ice and walked to the

front of the stage to announce the start of the national final.

The curtain rose, and 30 beautiful models filed out, walking on the stage one after the other. They were wearing new autumn outfits designed by Xie Feng, who was one of the judges.

Pairs of legs along with wheat ears, chilli and garlic (how did they get that in?) praised the pregnant autumn. Xie Feng nodded again and again off stage. The new models this year are of a much higher level compared to previous years. It seems like the Chinese fashion industry is being embraced throughout the country.

The models went around and formed a line again. They took a pose, pressing on their waists, holding their abs and exposing their legs. The advantage of the pose was that it showed everyone the size of their waists and the length of their legs. The difference was clear at first sight.

The girls got off the stage. While the male models got ready, the host introduced the concept of the autumn collection to create the right atmosphere and allow time for the judges to grade the female models.

When the male models got on the stage, everyone was shocked by the advanced designs of the rising designer. The colors of the outfits were in sharp contrast, and the wheat around the bottom of the pant legs reminded the audience of nature.

Special oil had been applied to the models' muscles to make their skin look like copper and their lines seem smoother. It was time to



judge their bodies. The judges examined their figures and grade them silently before the models retreated backstage.

Sister Xue pulled Qin Guan over and pushed him toward the bathroom, urging him, "Quick, take a shower! Clean yourself all over. Understand?" Then she handed him a professional oil brush. "Ou Qiang is holding up two sprayers for you and Ouyang Fen. Be fast, or you'll be late!"

Qin Guan went inside, looking at the brush as he took off his clothes. "Shall I use it to brush someone else's back? But whose? Surely not Ou Qiang's? Obviously, it's for him!"

When Qin Guan entered the simple bathroom, he found Ouyang Fen taking an uncomfortable shower under a sprayer. A small pink brush was in his hand, the same brush as the blue one in Qin Guan's hand. When Ou Qiang saw Qin Guan, he shouted at him happily, "Hey, this sprayer is for you! I'll go find my baby Xue. You two have a nice shower..."

"..."

The two of them faced each other in silence, washing the oil off their bodies. More and more people started entering the bathroom, which made them feel better. They didn't know how to talk with someone hostile. Ouyang Fen seemed lost in thought as he stared at the pink brush in his hand.

Qin Guan decided to be magnanimous. He was older than Ouyang Fen by three years after all. Waving the blue brush, he said, "You

don't like the pink one? I can brush your back with the blue one if you want."

Ouyang Fen nodded unconsciously and turned around. I'll be late for the next show.

Using the skills he had learned from his father, Qin Guan brushed Ouyang Fen's back quickly and turned his own back to him. Ouyang Fen seemed to be admiring him.

He felt the first brush. "F\*ck, that hurts!" Qin Guan shouted, jumping away. Is he taking advantage of this to get back at me? I shouldn't have been kind to him!

# Chapter 81: The End Of The Competition

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Ouyang Fen's expression was both ashamed and resentful as he held the pink brush in his hand.

"I... I've never brushed someone else's back before." He looked like a child standing in the corner for doing something naughty.

Qin Guan instructed him patiently, "Right, be careful. Move it from top to the bottom. Right... Is my back red? It doesn't matter, it'll get cleaner. Ah... oh... That feels so good..." Can you not sigh that way, dude? Look at how the models around you are looking at you.

After brushing Qin Guan's back clean, Ouyang Fen felt a sense of achievement. Qin Guan's back is smooth and clean. This was my first time ever brushing someone else's back. What a success! Ouyang Fen looked at the small pink brush. Pink sure is my lucky color. Shall I take this for my pink collection?

Ouyang Fen ran out of the bathroom happily at the thought and put the brush into his bag. Qin Guan changed into his swimming trunks and went outside. Sister Xue exploded at the sight of him.

"Did Ouyang Fen do this on purpose? There are three scratches on your back! I'll scratch his face!" Qin Guan stopped Sister Xue and pointed at his swimming trunks. "I think the scratches match my swimsuit well. The effect is excellent!"

Sister Xue looked at that essential part of Qin Guan and saw a

bloody scratch print on both ends of the swimming trunks. It gave off a wild, sexy vibe. Combined with the scratches on his back, they complimented each other and inspired the audience.

Sister Xue patted him on the back excitedly. "Good boy! You are really smart and creative!" Qin Guan smiled to himself. Is this what they call an accidental positive outcome?

Meanwhile, Ouyang Fen had already gotten off the stage and turned in Qin Guan's direction hesitantly. Brushing your back was just an accident. We are still enemies. I will crush you one day.

Qin Guan smiled brightly and got on the T stage, following the rhythm of the music. The judges started talking heatedly when he got close.

"Look at his figure and face! Superb!"

"Yes, I'm impressed. He was the winner of the capital competition. His total score was the best one in the national quarter-final."

"A good result. He's in perfect shape, and his style is mature. How old is he?"

"Nineteen. He's got great potential. He is 186 centimeters tall. Two more centimeters would have been better though. If he was 188 cm, he'd even be able to walk on an international runway."

They were still talking when Qin Guan turned around. They grew even more excited when they saw his back.

"Look at his back!"

"Where did he get that idea? That's so brave of him! His swimming trunks go well with the scratches."

"He is so clever! It's only scratches, no scars, no blood, no harm to his body. What a genius!" (Overkill, dude. Believe me, you have no idea what really happened.)

"That's the feeling! It looks like a theme show in Europe. He took it to the next level."

"Good idea. Maybe I could use it for a swimsuit show in the future."

They didn't give their full attention to the rest of the models after Qin Guan returned backstage.

Sister Xue handed him his clothes before the jealous onlookers, encouraging him, "Cheer up! There's still one more round to go!"

The final round was a photo competition. Models had to perform well and take outstanding poses of comprehensive quality.

Top models had to have a strong sense of the camera and be easy

to cooperate with. They would all take turns walking on the stage and the photographers of the competition would take candid photographs of them. Then the judges would put all the photos together and compare them.

"Click, click..." Several cameras snapped pictures simultaneously. The flashes and the steps of the models were combined into a specific rhythm. Finally, all the contestants gathered on the stage, the photographers took a group photo, and they returned backstage to wait for the results.

They were strolling around anxiously, talking in low voices. The atmosphere was charged. Off stage, the judges were busy with the final scores of the models. The assistant handed the final list to the host, who announced the results over the background music.

Ouyang Fen looked unconsciously at Qin Guan, who seemed totally oblivious to everything. He was chewing bubble gum leisurely.

What the hell is he doing? How can he still care about eating right now? Dude, is that Dada bubble gum? I want a pink strawberry one!

"The winner is Qin Guan from the capital, who won the popular vote!"

When the results were announced, the contestants started hugging each other goodbye. There were plenty of people surrounding the judges. Assistants and agents tried to suck up to

them, holding their cards in their hands in an effort to promote their models.

Qin Guan and Ouyang Fen, the luckiest guys in the competition, had won both a bonus outdoor photo-shoot in the capital and a small review from "Capital Fashion" magazine.

A journalist of a local printed media with a small readership was inspired by the fact that there were two contestants from the capital in the competition.

They are the winner and runner-up of both the national final and the capital competition. How dramatic! They supported each other and fought together. Hand in hand, they overcame all the difficulties and defeated the contestants from all other areas.

The journalist was full of passion as he looked at the two guys sitting in chairs. On the left, Ouyang Fen was grinding his teeth with a sour expression on his face. He was holding two awards in his arms. On the right, Qin Guan picked up a prize cup and put it on a table at random, saying helplessly, "I can't hold so many awards!"

The journalist was confused. What's going on?

Qin Guan's words provoked Ouyang Fen's rebelling nature. He suddenly stood up and shouted, "You bastard!" Before he could continue, Qin Guan pointed at the journalist, and Ouyang Fen withered at once.

The journalist smiled awkwardly. Anyhow, I'll just write a short article about them. I'd better finish the interview quickly and run away. It seems that the two of them have a tense relationship.

He could imagine the mutual enmity between them off-site, and he asked some basic questions quickly before running away with his notebook.

Ouyang Fen was dragged off by his cousin as he shouted loudly, "I'll be back!" He had to nurture their love-hate relationship. Humming, Qin Guan put his diplomas and awards in his large bag and got into Sister Xue's car.

When they reached his college, Sister Xue gave Qin Guan a thick envelope before he got off the car. "Your prize for the competition." Then she drove away with an elegant turn, leaving smoke behind her. It seemed fair to Qin Guan. He climbed upstairs, jumping the steps two and three at a time with his large bag and the envelope.

Rushing into his dormitory, he threw the bag down and opened the envelope excitedly. A pile of 100-yuan bills fell on his bed.



## Chapter 82: An Honourable Sophomore

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One hundred, two hundred... Qin Guan counted the bills by spitting on his fingers. My fingers are too dry, I might as well wet them with my spit...Six thousand nine hundred, seven thousand... Seven thousand? Why seven thousand? One hundred, two hundred... It was seven thousand! Qin Guan counted the bills again.

It should have been 10,000 yuan. Why did I only get 7,000? He suddenly recalled Sister Xue's expression when she had handed him the envelope. She had looked satisfied to him. Right, she must have felt great about taking 3,000 yuan for handling fees!

Several days ago, Qin Guan had generously given Sister Xue 600 yuan. At the time, he had said that it was handling money, but Sister Xue had said it was charity.

So 600 yuan was charity, yet 3,000 yuan was not? That exploiting Sister Xue! Crying, Qin Guan fell on his bed. 3,000 yuan were gone! His fate was decided. Forget it. I'll just cry myself to sleep.

The new term began in autumn. Cherishing their dreams, young boys and girls stepped onto the campus of the colleges they wanted to attend. The bustling crowd and the parents coming in in great numbers had no influence on Qin Guan, who had been defrauded by his roommates.

The day after the competition, his roommates had returned to college, fighting with each other. As an honorable cadre of the

Students Union, Ye Dong's priority was looking after his roommates.

What should the Students Union do to strengthen the brilliant image of our university and provide freshmen with better services? Please shout with me! Serve the people!

At the end of the summer, amid intense heat, Qin Guan was forced by Ye Dong to pick up freshmen from the railway station. It was an honorable, but tedious task.

If he had been assigned to guide freshmen around the campus or serve at the reception, Qin Guan wouldn't have complained. Sending him to the Capital Railway Station to pick up freshmen was senior oppression though. Their ulterior motive was to prevent Qin Guan from attracting all the junior female students with his charm. As a result, he was assigned the most time-consuming, painstaking task.

Three days before the new term began, there had to be staff at the reception of the railway station 24 hours a day. Several groups of students and tutors were on duty on eight-hour shifts.

Qin Guan was in charge of the morning shift, when the workload was the heaviest. He and Wang Lei were in the same group. His eldest brother was fascinated by paperwork.

They wore their student uniforms to impress the parents and promote the image of the college, as well as the beauty of the city. This creative idea had been the principal's, who had remembered

that a batch of school uniforms had been made. He had asked Secretary Liu to find the uniforms and use them to promote the image of the university.

Following the principal's directions, Secretary Liu along with Grandpa Zhang, the inventory keeper, had taken the stock out. The students of the Public Relations Department had almost collapsed under the weight of the uniforms.

The fashionable royal blue khaki pants, white long-sleeved shirts and warrior shoes gave off an honorable 1960s vibe.

They also wore red scarves on their chests. We love our hometown.

As Qin Guan and Wang Lei left their dormitory in their uniforms, Liu Xiaoyang was laughing so hard that he fell on the floor. The two of them reminded him of [Xiao Ming and Xiao Hua](#). Surrounded by the students of the whole dormitory, the two fellow martyrs got on a shuttle bus headed for the Capital Railway Station.

Several shuttle buses were carrying freshmen between the college and the railway station. Qin Guan and Wang Lei had been assigned to help the tutors.

When they arrived at the reception, the students there were busy with work. The students in charge of guidance were running around sweating, and those holding the poster of the university felt like they would suffer from varicose veins. They let out a

relieved sigh when they saw the assistants arrive. We are exhausted from work!

The seniors, who were carrying luggage for younger girls on campus were smiling to themselves. Don't make the same mistake we did. As sophomores, we were exploited by seniors, so now we're playing the same trick on sophomores ourselves. You might think yourself a prince, but we have our own way of defeating you. We'll make you lose points before lovely girls and make a bad first impression. We sure love the principal. That uniform does indeed harm one's appearance!

That's what the seniors were thinking, but they were bound to lose all hope when they saw Qin Guan. Reality was cruel, and Qin Guan's appearance was still unbeatable.

Anyone wearing loose pants and a shabby shirt would have been reduced from an eight to a six. However, Qin Guan had upgraded the uniform to an eight. With his long legs and slim waist, Qin Guan was confident about his style. The uniform looked casual on his body.

Qin Guan and Wang Lei carried a small table to the square to set up a simple reception desk by the entrance. Some people who had been squatting there stood up and walked over.

"Hey, young man. Do you know the rules here?" their leader asked Qin Guan.

"What rules?" Qin Guan had no idea what he meant. Is there a

new policy in the railway station? Or is there a regulation for picking up freshmen?

"All small hotels have their own turf. Understand?"

"They seem like green hands. Who sent you here without making sure you knew the rules first?"

"You were about to set up a table here. Weren't you afraid you'd be caught by the administrative staff?"

"That's it! Go squat over there and learn something useful first..."

They had mistaken Qin Guan and Wang Lei for competition. Their uniforms made them look like hotel idlers looking for customers. Qin Guan had failed to notice that about his appearance. Actually, if they had been at the railway station looking for customers, they would have dressed neatly.

It was nonsense that beautiful people looked beautiful even in trash bags. People had to pay attention to their looks. The men were trying to persuade them kind-heartedly, when Wang Lei silently took out a large plate with the college's name on it and set it on the table.

Two fictional characters often appearing in middle school textbooks.

## Chapter 83: A Strong Girl

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"They are college students."

"Yes, they are. Why didn't they tell us earlier?"

Qin Guan and Wang Lei were sad to see the men go.

...

Mou Xiaoliu was also feeling sad. She had completely lost her way. The passengers moving to-and-fro watched the petite girl carrying two large bags as she shuttled down the hall, the corridors and the bus stops.

The two bags she was carrying on her shoulders were almost as tall as she was. Her face wasn't red, and she was not breathing heavily, but the sweat on her forehead showed that she was a little hot from running. When she reached the square again, she finally saw the poster of the Capital University of Finance and Economics.

Reassured, she calmed down. After moving the bags further up on her shoulders, she carefully sped up. As she walked, she was thinking about the pickles her mother had made, wondering if they had spilled when she had been walking fast.

The girl reached the reception and looked at the savior standing behind the table with shinning eyes. Thank god they put such a large poster on the square, or I'd be searching for a long time! Oh

my! My savior is so good-looking! He's 100 times more handsome than the language teacher in Taohua Town. Mou Xiaoliu considered this her lucky day. She had finally arrived at the capital after a long trip and numerous trials, enrolled at the university of her dreams, and met a handsome upperclassman. For Mou Xiaoliu, life couldn't get any better.

Qin Guan looked up and saw a small girl with red, round cheeks. She was just standing in front of the table with shinning eyes, watching him silently in a silly, yet cute way.

He smiled at the girl. "Are you a fellow student? Are you a freshman at our university?"

The little girl nodded silently with a silly smile. Qin Guan smiled back and asked, "Did you bring your admission letter? I can help you register."

The girl came back to her senses and nodded hard. She put the large bags down carefully and took her admission letter out of a pocket on her chest.

Checking the letter, Qin Guan wrote her name down on the freshmen list. As he handed the letter back to her, he warned her, "Keep it safe."

Mou Xiaoliu nodded again. She put the letter back in her pocket and tried to pick up the two bags.

The bags were too big for a little girl, so Qin Guan stood up, said something to Wang Lei, and told Mou Xiaoliu that he would carry one of them to the shuttle bus for her.

Mou Xiaoliu was happy that he offered, but she waved her hands in an effort to stop him. "I don't need help, I can manage myself. My luggage is quite heavy."

Qin Guan smiled with confidence. Are you kidding? If a little girl like you can carry two bags, a strong young man like me can carry one without breaking a sweat. Qin Guan picked up the larger bag with one hand and tried to lift it. The bag remained completely still. It seems like I underestimated the enemy. He exerted all his strength again, but the bag didn't move.

Wang Lei buried his face behind the table. I'm sorry, dude, but I can't bear to watch. Embarrassed, Qin Guan stole a glance at Mou Xiaoliu, who was still looking at him in admiration. Alas, the upperclassman might not be stronger than Da Niu in my village, but he is indeed handsome.

My girl, good looks do not equal strength.

Qin Guan secretly let out a relieved breath when he saw that the girl wasn't showing disdain at his weakness. No man could bear to be called useless. Grinding his back teeth, he suddenly used all his strength, lifting the bag up to his shoulder.

Ignoring his wicked friend Wang Lei, who was laughing loudly on the side, Qin Guan told Mou Xiaoliu proudly, "Follow me to the



shuttle." Mou Xiaoliu lifted the other bag with one hand and carried it on her shoulder with ease, following Qin Guan happily.

As she walked with him, she was still wondering why the other upperclassman had been laughing so much. Little girl, there's an old saying that says, 'In the eye of the lover, his beloved is always a beauty'. You are completely ignoring his weak, faltering steps, because you're focused on his butt.

Breathing heavily, Qin Guan managed to keep moving forward. On the way, he told Mou Xiaoliu, "Follow the tutor to the reception after you get off the bus. Hand in the education and dormitory fees first."

Mou Xiaoliu nodded tactfully.

After taking another breath, Qin Guan went on, "Put away your receipt and train ticket to the capital. You can get a refund for them."

"Read carefully all the materials, including the 'College Student Tutorial', 'Life Guidance for College Students', and the special freshmen issues in our university magazine."

Mou Xiaoliu nodded again. I can get a refund for my ticket. That's great!

Qin Guan helped her lift her luggage to the compartment above her head as he advised her kind-heartedly, "Ask the upperclassman

on this bus for help when you get off. You're such a petite girl. Be careful so you don't drop them."

Before she could express her appreciation, Qin Guan added, "Leave your telephone number to your tutor and the teacher in charge of your class. It will be useful in the future. This year, our university will grant student loans to all students who qualify. You can consult with the teacher in charge when you pay the fees."

Mou Xiaoliu was close to tears. He is so kind. I'll be the happiest girl in my village! She took a bow before Qin Guan and said loudly, "Thank you so much! I'll do my best!" Then she looked up at him with her shining eyes.

Looking around, Qin Guan felt a little embarrassed by her sincere appreciation. He waved the silly little girl off. "Don't mention it, it's my duty. The bus is nearly full. Take care of yourself. I'll off!" He greeted his fellow students and tutors on the bus shyly before running away as fast as he could.

When he got back to the reception, Wang Lei was busy with registrations. Qin Guan rushed to help him relieve the pressure. When the wave of students got on the bus, Wang Lei turned to Qin Guan and started to laugh again, remembering the previous scene.

Qin Guan tried to explain awkwardly, "The bag was really heavy. It might have been 50 kilos. I wonder what she'd put inside."

Wang Lei shook his head and touched his glasses, pretending to be serious as he asked gloatingly, "My fellow student, this is the

first time you fail to look cool in a really long time. What's your opinion on this?"

## Chapter 84: The Hapless Duo

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What choice did Qin Guan have? Who knew that that little girl would have been blessed with such great strength? No matter what others thought, the girl had impressed him a lot. If Mou Xiaoliu had known that Qin Guan was talking about her with his roommates, she would have been over the moon.

While she rode the shuttle bus, she asked the upperclassman there some questions.

"Do you know the upperclassman at the reception?"

"Of course, practically all the sophomores at our college know him."

"Is he that popular? That's good. What's his name? I'd like to thank him again if I meet him in the future."

The student smiled automatically as he answered, "He has too many titles. They call him the Handsome Straight-A Accounting Student, the Dancing Childe, and the College Heart-breaker. But his real name is Qin Guan."

Mou Xiaoliu recited the titles carefully in her mind twice before nodding at the upperclassman.

When the bus stopped, the upperclassman experienced Qin Guan's earlier struggle. He had to carry the two bags off the bus

with shaking legs.

As Mou Xiaoliu walked to the reception with her bags, she was thinking, "Daddy, the people here are all kind. Everything has gone smoothly so far. But the students in my college are all weak. It seems like I'll have to help them a lot in the future."

A whole bus of students had finished enrolling, yet Qin Guan wasn't feeling any better.

The hot sun was high in the sky as they ran around on the square without any shade. They kept talking with students and parents until their mouths felt dry and their tongues scorched. When their replacements arrived, they found them lying on the table like withered cucumbers.

Qin Guan and Wang Lei decided to bring an umbrella the next day.

They took the shuttle home, and the first thing they did when they entered their dormitory was take a bath. In his underpants, Qin Guan poured warm water on his body with a red bucket. Cool! They both felt refreshed after the bath.

Wrapping his large towel around his head, Qin Guan grinned at Wang Lei. "Do I look like a tank soldier?" They pretended to fight as they went out of the bathroom. Suddenly, they were surprised to see girls standing in the corridor.

The two of them were the top students in the whole college. Wang Lei had a high IQ, but hanging out with Qin Guan for too long seemed to have lowered it. He had even forgotten that it was a special day.

It was enrolment day, so there were lots of freshmen with their parents as well as many idlers moving around the building. The boys looked at each other in silent despair. The two of them were standing there in just their underpants, water drops rolling down their bodies. At least we look strong...

Qin Guan and Wang Lei pretended to be calm. They exchanged a glance as they walked confidently in their slippers, trying to look nonchalant. When they finally pushed the door to their room open, they exhaled in relief. Oh my! We were naked in public. We might have had our underpants on, but people still saw our bare chests!

They acted like nothing had happened, taking advantage of their selective memory.

When everyone returned, Ye Dong was beaten by Qin Guan and Wang Lei, who blamed all their misfortunes on him. It was because of Ye Dong's promotion that they had attracted the attention of the tutors. At the thought that they would have to do this job again and again in the following days, they ground their teeth.

"Bang, bang..." With bumps all over his head, Ye Dong went to the cafeteria for dinner with them, ordering extra carbonado legs to compensate for his friends' energy loss, not only that day, but also for the days to come.

.....

When they arrived at the station the next day, they realized that one chicken leg was not enough for the work they did.

It was raining, and the small table couldn't be set up. The fellow sufferers stood under an umbrella on the square, getting mud on their pants. The passing labor workers reminded them kindly, "Silly boys, you could wait in the hall!"

"Poor them! They only have the one umbrella!"

They had been mistaken for labor workers! Wang Lei silently ran back to the shuttle bus to get the college board.

"They are students. They're working so hard!"

The labor workers left. The two boys standing in the rain were like symbols that could be seen from afar. The tutor in the shuttle bus was relieved. "I hadn't expected them to be so dedicated."

Because of the rainy weather, the staff of the railway station had allowed all buses from different colleges to park across the square. All the passengers could see them clearly as soon as they disembarked. Suddenly, Wang Lei rushed out with the board without listening to the instructions of the tutor. The tutor had just praised them for their enthusiasm. Would he admit that they were silly after all?

Definitely not!

Qin Guan didn't know that there was a change until he sent the first group of students and their parents off. He immediately ran to the square to share the news with Wang Lei, and they returned together with the second group.

Ashamed of their IQ, they remained silent until they got back to their dormitory. Their wet clothes were pasted on their bodies, making them feel miserable. They took them off as soon as possible. Their shirts were torn apart, and the pants held up by an elastic cord fell down on the floor.



## Chapter 85: Misfortunes Come In Pairs

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Suddenly, the squeaky door was pushed open and they heard Ye Dong speaking loudly from outside, "It doesn't matter. Come in, please. There's no one sleeping in our dormitory right now. Come on in, we can play cards!"

When Ye Dong saw the girls staring at something speechlessly, he turned around. The three boys had identical shocked expressions on their faces. F\*ck! Qin Guan and Wang Lei were naked before an audience again!

Wang Lei's upper body was bare, and Qin Guan was in his colorful Calabash Brothers shorts.

Ye Dong realized that this would cost him a lot.

Sniffing, Qin Guan pulled his pants up calmly. No big deal. Compared to yesterday's disaster, this is nothing.

Wang Lei didn't care. I have no boobs after all.

Qin Guan pulled his pants up and waved at the girls shamelessly. "Come on in. Let's play cards!"

The onlookers were so shocked by his attitude that they dropped everything in their hands to the floor.

The girls entered the dormitory as if nothing had happened.

Li Jie shut off his computer and made room for them on the largest table in the dormitory.

Some people had private affairs to attend to, but the rest were divided into teams by lottery.

Wang Lei and Qin Guan were in one team, and Yang Jing and Ye Dong were in another. The two girls were in one team each. Wang Lei, Qin Guan and a chubby girl made up one team.

They began to shuffle the cards. Yang Jing was unsatisfied with the plain deck, and she wanted to punish the losers to make the game more fun.

Therefore, they decided that the winners would draw tortoises and paste post-its on the losers' faces.

The challenging game began. They competed in "twos".

Ye Dong threw a diamond two down and got on the offensive. After two rounds, Wang Lei and Qin Guan were losing by a lot. Unlucky guys couldn't blame anyone but themselves. They had only three poor diamonds in their hands, so nothing could help them.

The chubby girl put down a card, then looked at the rest of her cards carefully. Suddenly, she shouted, "Oh! I could have gained

the advantage with a pair of twos, right?"

Qin Guan and Wang Lei nodded as she confessed, "I had two hearts, but I forgot."

After playing for a while, the chubby girl made a mistake that caused them to lose. Staring down at the good cards in his hand, Qin Guan blamed her subconsciously. "Did you forget how to play?"

The girl was very shy. After a long while, she said, "I was thinking of Calabash Brothers."

Bang!

Li Jie had fallen off the bed.

What could Qin Guan say? What dared he say?

He could only advise the girl, "Pay attention, please."

The fat girl grinned and patted her chest, promising, "Don't worry, I'm the queen of cards."

Qin Guan and Wang Lei mustered all their courage to finish the game. As expected, they were destroyed. They got one post-it and one tortoise each.

Oh, no! Qin Guan got two tortoises and one post-it, and Wang Lei got two post-its and one tortoise. The girls were their guests, so the two gentlemen took the punishment for them.

"Ah! I broke up the successive cards!" The chubby girl made another mistake.

Ye Dong and his partner were promoted to the highest level. They had reached a "four". More post-its and tortoises were pasted on Qin Guan's and Wang Lei's faces.

"Oh, no! 'Four' was the King. I was wrong!" There was an abundance of tortoises. Finally, Ye Dong's team reached a "Five". Liu Xiaoyang drew more tortoises with ease.

After one round, the girls returned to their own dormitory in satisfaction. On their way back, they were talking about Qin Guan.

"He has a good figure."

"Yeah, it's pretty good."

"Calabash Brothers..."

"Ha, ha, ha..."

When the girls were gone, Qin Guan and Wang Lei turned to Ye Dong angrily, the post-its on their faces flying in the air.

Everyone else pointed at them and laughed. "Could you please wash your faces first?"

The two of them went outside with their basins and soap.

Suddenly, a group of parents and students with a guiding tutor passed and saw the two silly students with post-its on their faces.

Silence prevailed. Finally, Qin Guan and Wang Lei went through the crowd and into the bathroom, pretending that nothing had happened.

The parents pretended not to see anything either. They remained silent until the tutor had left. Then some of them pulled over their children and urged them, "Try to get along with your roommates. If they bully you, tell us and we'll beat them."

A mother's boy had been shocked by Qin Guan, but he was comforted by his mother's words. I'm well-behaved. Those college guys are terrible!

## Chapter 86: The Troublesome Girl

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Qin Guan and Wang Lei were ready to explode. They washed their faces in the bathroom and pushed the door open with a bang.

When Ye Dong saw that the two of them were on the verge of starting a fight, he pushed his chest out and took a mighty pose. With wide-open eyes, he shouted, "Come on! Forgive me!" He surrendered immediately. The onlookers and his two rivals were left speechless.

Contented, Qin Guan picked up a toothpick and held it in his mouth. Shaking his legs out proudly, he asked in a serious voice, "You know the rules, don't you?"

Looking at Qin Guan gratefully, Ye Dong answered like a little girl, "At your service."

Li Jie spit out a mouthful of water as he watched them. You two are such drama queens. This is disgusting! We'll lose our appetite for supper because of your performance.

Ye Dong was forced to sign a contract with humiliating terms. The contract read as follows:

Ye Dong is a criminal who disregarded the friendship between brothers, thus committing one of the most heinous offences in the world. For 10 days, he has to treat his charitable friends, Qin Guan and Wang Lei, to dinner at Gui Street.

The dinner has to include a portion of spicy hot crays, a plate of boiled green soy beans and peanuts, and a portion of salty yellow croakers. Beer is also mandatory. Qin Guan and Wang Lei have the right to add any extra dishes that they wish at the restaurant.

Signature: Ye Dong. Date: August 30th, 1999

Qin Guan and Wang Lei put the contract away and went to sleep. Tomorrow will be the last day.

.....

September 1st was Commencement Day. The freshmen enjoyed the golden autumn. Qin Guan was a sophomore though, so he was busy with courses and paid no attention to younger girls.

Besides, there was already a young girl waiting for him. It was the weekend, so he had to go to Huang Jiajia's home. This would be their first lesson for the new semester.

Whenever he thought of the journey to Bashang for the photoshoot, Qin Guan got a headache. I have to ask Huang Jiajia for a day off. What will she do? Roll around on the floor in tears? Cry and shout? Stop. Just stop it. Qin Guan decided to play it by ear.

When he got there, he asked her mother for a day off, and she agreed without hesitation. Then Qin Guan walked to Huang Jiajia's

room and pushed the door open. As expected, she had been eavesdropping. When the door opened suddenly, it hit her nose, leaving a red mark on her face.

Qin Guan burst into laughter at the sight of her covering her nose tearfully.

He knocked the books against her head playfully. "Stop joking around. Let's start our lesson!"

Huang pointed at Qin Guan angrily. "You liar! You took advantage of my feelings!" Qin Guan hastened to close the door. "What are you talking about? That's nonsense!"

Huang Jianjia sat down at her desk. "Liar, liar! I heard what you said to my mum. You had promised to buy me snacks!" She stooped over the desk, crying sadly.

Qin Guan sat down next to her helplessly and tried to explain. "Could you please respect me and call me sir? You are really brave. Now stop crying, or your mum might think I'm bullying you."

Huang Jiajia cried even louder.

"Okay, princess, I surrender. Stop, listen to me!"

She continued to cry.



"I promised to treat you to snacks if your scores were all above B."

Huang Jiajia's crying subsided and turned into groans and moans.

She is guilty of unreasonable behavior. Qin Guan smiled to himself as he went on, "I asked for a day off for business, not for fun. I have to go to a magazine photoshoot."

Huang Jiajia suddenly looked up and asked excitedly, "What kind of photoshoot? What magazine? I want to buy it!"

That was a quick change! Qin Guan fixed his eyes on her face, but he couldn't find any signs of crying. Except for her red nose, the rest of her face looked quite clean.

I was cheated! She was only pretending to cry! Qin Guan was really angry. That little girl is a talented liar! Her white little bra flashed in his mind at the thought.

Stop, stop, stop! Qin Guan shook his head unconsciously in an effort to push the wicked thought away. Pretending to be calm, he told her, "You have to study first. I'll take you out when your scores are announced."

Realizing he had seen through her, Huang stuck her tongue out and picked up her textbook obediently. Before opening it, she asked again, "Hey, what kind of part-time job is it?"

I love that question! Qin Guan had the chance to show off again. Her mother forgot to ask me earlier, which deprived me of the chance to brag.

Qin Guan coughed and adjusted his sitting position before answering in his typical indifferent way, "It's not a part-time job, which is very annoying! The chief editor of the magazine begged me to help him. I was too kind to say no when he was crying, so I accepted the job. In fact, it's an unrewarding task. There will be no extra bonus besides the daily wage."

Qin Guan straightened up.

# Chapter 87: The Sleeping Teacher

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Huang Jiajia asked in admiration, "Teacher Qin, you are a part-time model, aren't you? Is that why the chief editor knows you and asked you for help?"

Qin Guan wanted to weep, but was unable to produce any tears. Huang Jiajia, you are so clever and to the point! Why don't you use that IQ during your lessons? Looking at her shining eyes, Qin Guan decided to tell her.

Opening her new textbook at random, he answered calmly, "I signed a contract with New Silk Road, and my agent sent me to a competition to have a try. I won accidentally."

Qin Guan felt that was a complete answer, and so did Huang Jiajia. I know more about him now. What shall I do? He looks even more attractive to me.

It took Qin Guan more than 10 minutes to comfort her. Then he organized his thoughts and tapped the textbook with his pen. "So much for chatting. Let's start our lesson. We'll begin with Math." The first class of the new semester was relatively simple. Qin Guan helped Huang Jiajia with the new knowledge points of the book and asked her to practice.

Then he looked at his watch and realized that half the time had passed. While she exercised, he read his own textbook and relaxed.

Ever since he had returned to college, Qin Guan had been really

busy. He was slightly ashamed for boasting to his student before he had even showed off to his roommates.

I'm sleepy. My eyes are closing. Despite his tough mind, Qin Guan fell asleep while he read his book.

When Huang Jiajia finished her exercises and looked up, she found him leaning against her bed in a reading posture, using the teddy bear under his body as a pillow.

Huang Jiajia smiled before standing up carefully and sneaking up to the bed. Qin Guan's mouth was open, and saliva was dripping out. His hair covered his face softly, shaking with his breath.

Huang Jiajia touched him with a barrette, which shook slightly as it scratched his face. Qin Guan frowned, but didn't wake up. Huang Jiajia stepped forward and sat on the bed, craning her neck toward Qin Guan's face.

It was a perfect face, with smooth skin, dashing eyebrows, a high nose, and thin lips. His beautiful eyes were shut beneath his long eyelashes. That handsome face must have charmed numerous girls! At the thought that she was one of them, Huang Jiajia felt wronged.

I know that he has a girlfriend, but I can't get him out of my mind. If I don't have something that belongs to him, I'll be devastated. In her imagination, she was the heroine in a tragedy and a dissatisfied girl in a boudoir. Stop, you drama queen!

Huang Jiajia smiled as her lips approached Qin Guan.

Both their faces were red, his from sleep and hers from nervousness. Her lips were getting closer and closer, like a pink rose in early puberty. Right before touching his skin, the rose suddenly bloomed open. "Qin Guan! Get up!" Huang Jiajia shouted by his ear.

Qin Guan got up dizzily, his ears ringing and his saliva finally falling off. "Eh, that's disgusting!" Huang Jiajia took out her handkerchief to wipe his mouth.

Qin Guan was still dizzy. Who the hell would wake up their teacher in such a way? I shouldn't treat the naughty child kindly!

He massaged his swelling head and felt his ear go back to normal. It's late, let's call it a day. Then he stood up and knocked on Huang Jiajia's head. "Call me sir. That's it for today. Remember to review the course. I'll check your exercises when I return next week."

Huang Jiajia ground her teeth as she covered her head. That's twice you've hurt me today. I'll pay you back.

Then she saw Qin Guan off. Before he left, Huang Jiajia said in front of her mother, "Teacher Qin, take me to Carrefour when you come back."

Qin Guan stopped as Huang showed off before her mother. "Mum, Teacher Qin will treat me. Tell me if there's something you

want us to get for you."

# Chapter 88: The Fun Journey To The Grassland

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Fine, Huang Jiajia. You wait and see. Smiling shyly at her mother, Qin Guan left.

After several threats by Sister Xue, she and Qin Guan followed the magazine operation car in Sister Xue's car, headed for the Bashang Grassland.

The Bashang Grassland was located in the Manchu Autonomous County of Fengning, north of the capital. It was the natural grassland closest to the capital, also known as the First Grassland North of Beijing.

The rich, beautiful grassland had plenty of water and lush grass. The seasons there were distinct, and the scenery was different by daylight and by night. It was a photographer's paradise.

The golden autumn had changed the scenery. After several months of frost, the pines, spruces and white birches were ready begin the most splendid period of their lives.

The "Models" magazine had chosen the Willow Valley as its destination. The group got there in the evening. The country home inn they had contacted in advance was ready to receive them.

The villager and his wife had cleaned all the rooms, and their small farmyard was soon filled with lodgers.

Qin Guan found his room.

The guestroom was clean and simple. A small beige table was on the tidy adobe kang [1], which was a unique delight in the wild.

Qin Guan put his luggage on the table and went to check the small bathroom. There was only a personal washbasin and a chamber pot in it. Qin Guan unpacked his luggage and changed into a comfortable pullover before going out. He had to do something about his hungry stomach.

When they sat down around the big table, the couple served them hot traditional dishes.

The accommodation there cost only 50 yuan per day, including a room and three meals. If the guests ordered any more food, they would be charged extra.

Qin Guan was so hungry that, at the director's cue, he immediately buried his face in a large bowl of rice.

The potatoes and ribs were soft and tasty, and the fried egg with spring onion was delicious. The best dish was the fried beef with vegetables though. That dish made them unable to control their chopsticks.

While Qin Guan was busy filling his mouth with food, Ouyang Fen couldn't bear the sight of it. He had been in a bad mood the



whole day. I'm a careful man who looks after himself. I shouldn't have come here with so many tough guys. The shabby, large minibus had jolted so hard on the way there that his bottom was still hurting. He wasn't in the mood to eat.

Before he could complain though, his arch enemy had begun to eat as if there was no one else present.

What bad manners! There's a grain of rice on his face. Why has everyone gone crazy over such simple food? Ouyang Fen was lost in his thoughts amid the sound of chopsticks and plates clanging.

Well, they had to eat, or else Qin Guan would eat everything on the table. His speed had awakened everyone's appetite.

Is it that delicious? Ouyang Fen poked at the fried eggs with his chopsticks, because that was the dish that looked the most attractive to him. Another pair of chopsticks got there before him though and picked up the last piece of fried eggs.

Looking around him blankly, Ouyang Fen realized that the owner of the chopsticks was Qin Guan. It's not about the food, it's about dignity! Ouyang Fen cheered up and started grabbing food like everyone else.

Looking at him happily, his cousin told Sister Xue, "Young men always have a big appetite." Everyone looked serious. If we didn't, we'd starve tonight.

Sister Xue wouldn't have that though. She kicked Qin Guan under the table, warning him, "Slow down. There's a whole roasted lamb coming. Save room in your stomach."

Qin Guan stopped, but regained speed again soon enough. He answered ambiguously, chewing on a mouthful of beef, "I'm still growing. I'll be hungry again in a bit."

Several grains of rice flew out of his mouth and landed in Ouyang Fen's bowl. Ouyang Fen wasn't paying any attention though. He was too busy struggling with his ribs. Sister Xue and Qin Guan stared at each other for a second before pretending that nothing had happened.

When all the plates were clean, a bucket of rice had been eaten. The landlady was really pleased and proud of her cooking skills. Her husband looked glad himself as he rolled the lamb above the fire. Lamb dishes were the most common in the grassland because that meat was the best in quality. Oil was dripping into the fire fragrantly.

Intoxicated by the breeze of the early autumn in the grassland, everyone felt inspired. When they smelled the lamb though, they suddenly started shouting.

"I'm too full. I forgot about the lamb!"

"I beat you! I have some spare place in my stomach. Ha, ha, ha..."

The biggest losers were the Ou brothers. One of them had had very little food because he was on a diet, and the other one had failed to beat Qin Guan at an eating contest.

The couple carried the lamb to the table. It was a crisp, fragrant golden brown roast lamb. The pink-and-white meat was easy to tear off. In a few minutes, the tender meat was torn off the skeleton and placed on their plates.

Silence prevailed as everyone filled their mouths with lamb. It was really late at night, and the mosquitoes in the grassland went out silently to join the feast...

The next morning, everyone was shouting loudly.

"There are so many bumps on my face!"

Nothing could stop the mosquitoes on the grassland. They were stronger and more resolute than their counterparts in urban areas for they had to fight against the strong wind and different kinds of animals for food.

Qin Guan got up from the kang and entered the bathroom in his slippers.

Why is my butt so itchy? He touched his butt unconsciously. F\*ck! There were two big bumps on it. One was on the right side, and the other was on the left side. At least they are in a private place.

Qin Guan went out in his riding attire and saw that the other models were in the same outfit as well. The slim riding boots reached as high as their knees, the fitting breeches complimented their long legs, and the white shirt and black belt added elegance to the outfits.

The shooting was about a horsemanship competition on the grassland. The protagonist was an actual contestant, invited by the sponsor of the competition. The six models promoted by the magazine were just going to be in the background.

As they started for the shooting site, Qin Guan noticed that Ouyang Fen's face had also been marked by mosquitoes. A large red bump was on his right eyelid, and there was light shining from the little slit of his eye. Even the most compassionate assistant couldn't help but laugh.

To Ouyang Fen's surprise, Qin Guan remained silent. What's wrong with him?

Qin Guan was not in the mood to laugh at others. The bumps on his butt were itchy, and it hurt to sit on the shaking seat.

When they got off the car, everyone was fascinated by the scenery.

It was early autumn in the valley, and there were yellow birches, green spruces, pink bushes and verdant pines everywhere. Red fruit was hanging from Shanding trees. What a beautiful scenery!

On the grassland, fleets were just like bright clouds, blooming on the green slope of the mountain and adding an extra brush to the painting-like picture.

The staff of the horsemanship competition were waiting for them as fine horses were chewing on hay leisurely behind the fences. The protagonist was still on his way. The Mongolian staff prepared the horses for the models first.

The director of the competition walked towards them and asked, "Who can ride?" They all looked at each other. Despite his bumpy eye, Ouyang Fen held his hand up. "I can." Another female model held her hand up hesitantly. "A little."

The director waved at the Mongolian young men. "Baiyin and Buhe, come here and help." They loosened the bridle reins and came over. Pointing at the four models on the left, the director said, "Teach them the basic riding skills so they can cope with the photoshoot."

# Chapter 89: A Horse Called Troublemaker

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Baiyin and Buhe nodded. With the help of their temporary riding tutors, the four models pulled their horses to the track slowly.

Calling it a track was an exaggeration. It was basically an unsurfaced road created by local riders.

In 1999, horsemanship was still foreign to the Chinese. It was only a luxury for rich men. The horsemanship competition was actually an attempt by the Bashang Grassland to promote its tourism. Domestic horses, Chinese scenery, local riders and international rules constituted the international horsemanship endurance competition.

As a noble, natural, amusing sport, horsemanship was a combination of competitive sports, outdoor tourism, high-end social communication, pet feeding and stimulating decompression. Therefore, it didn't seem likely to fail to become popular.

The committee of the competition had invited most of the local riders, eager to hold the grand event. The riders had all grown up on horseback, so the competition level had improved greatly. Baiyin and Buhe were among the best riders and contestants.

Baiyin patted his horse on its back and asked it to stand still before he began the lesson.

"Check the horses' harnesses before mounting them, in case the saddle moves around. Then put the pedals down and adjust them

to the right length. Make the saddle wings even."

"Don't touch the horse's body when you put down the pedals. Just loosen your grip gently and let them hang down beside its ribs."

Baiyin gently pulled his pedals down. His students followed his movements with their eyes.

"Stand near your horse's forelegs and make sure both reins have the same length. The inner side of the reins should be pasted to the horse's neck, and the stiff bit should touch the corner of its mouth gently. Hold the reins with your left hand and insert your index finger between them to grasp the horse's hair and the whip."

"Turn your pedals clockwise with your right hand until the outside faces you. Then push on the pedal inwards to mount the horse." He lifted his left leg to push on one pedal.

"Be careful! The next step is essential! Don't touch the horse's body. Instead, hold the right side of the saddle bridge with your right hand. Your left tiptoe should be under the belly band. Push against the ground with your right foot and jump up gently," he said as he jumped up to mount the horse's back.

His students were listening to him carefully. Baiyin got on the horse easily, comforting the nervous young men.

"It seems simple." They all let out a relieved breath. Qin Guan

memorized what Baiyin had said carefully with both his brain and muscles.

As he rode on the horse, Baiyin taught them how to maintain a sitting posture while running. When he saw everyone nod in understanding, he asked them to have a try themselves with his and Buhe's help.

The girls went first. Sister Xue just watched, secretly handing Qin Guan a green apple.

"I heard that one has to have good relationship with his horse. You have to wash them, clean their barn, or feed them. The first two will not do for you, so I brought their favorite food."

Qin Guan looked down at the withered apple speechlessly. Are you kidding? My horse seems like a good boy. It doesn't need to be bribed.

Sister Xue warned him, "Look, it's showing the whites of its eyes to you!" Qin Guan turned to his horse, who was staring at him with a disparaging expression as it moved its thick lips.

You silly newbie. You want to ride on my head? I'll teach you a lesson!

Qin Guan decided to compromise and take the apple. "Fine, I'll have a try." When he presented the apple to the horse, the animal looked down at it. Oh, an apple? I like those.



He swallowed the apple, leaving a handful of saliva on Qin Guan's hand.

You cheated me! Is this what you call an apple? You dare try to manipulate me?

Broken pieces of apple landed on Qin Guan's head as he was wiping the saliva on his pants. The apple had worsened their bilateral relationship.

Before Qin Guan could do anything, Buhe shouted, "Young men, get on your horses!"

Qin Guan and the second runner-up of the competition got on their horses at his command. Buhe frowned at the second runner-up, who was not paying attention to detail.

Then he turned to Qin Guan. Well done! His posture is standard. Before he could praise Qin Guan though, Buhe realized something was wrong. Who assigned these horses to them? Who brought out the Troublemaker? As rookies, they should be riding tame old horses.

The person in charge was innocent. He had seen a noble, handsome young man and unconsciously given him the most handsome horse. The Troublemaker was the most handsome horse in the barn. He had smooth black hair and strong muscles, and he was very elegant.

However, he was a naughty horse. His favorite activity was making fun of strangers. There was no time for Buhe to warn Qin Guan. The Troublemaker was already moving.

Holding his proud head high and shaking its beautiful mane, he let out a long happy sound that could be interpreted as, "Ha ha, you are on my back! Come play with me now!"

The Troublemaker rushed to the track, leaving everyone screaming behind him.

# Chapter 90: Threatening But Not Dangerous

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The wind was howling in his ears as the scenery retreated at high speed. Qin Guan unconsciously held the reins tight.

The Troublemaker was running happily. The human on my back is really brave. He isn't even crying. If he can remain safe despite my unique skills, I'll recognize him as my equal.

Suddenly, the horse stopped. Qin Guan pressed himself tightly against its stomach and clenched the reins that kept him from falling off. Baiyin and Buhe caught up with them on their horses and saw that they were safe. Both of them sighed in relief.

As they helped Qin Guan off the horse, Baiyin praised him, "Good boy! You are good at riding. Even the Troublemaker has recognized your ability."

Mongolian men admired heroes and their tough spirit. Baiyin and Buhe quickly accepted Qin Guan as one of their own. Meanwhile, Qin Guan tried to hold his tears back. I have two mosquito bites on my butt! You can have a try! My legs are hurting too!

However, as he stared at the long face of the Troublemaker, who seemed to be smiling at him, Qin Guan wasn't feeling angry anymore. That horse is lovely. It admires me for my charm and ability.

Qin Guan was really proud of himself, and the Troublemaker was also happy. According to the standards of human beings, my little brother is a beauty.

After the accident, Baiyin taught them how to run slowly on horseback, which Qin Guan had proved he could handle. The bumps on his bottom were proof enough.

After all the models had mastered it, they returned to the gathering site, where the director, the photographer, and the other models were waiting for them.

The protagonist of the photoshoot was a professional domestic steeplechase athlete the director had invited to represent the competition. He was among the best in China, but he was a green hand at modelling.

Therefore, they all had to work as a team. As they were getting on their horses, the evil part of Ouyang Fen's heart was awakened.

Qin Guan was on a pretty black racing horse with white hair on its strong hooves. The horse looked like it was stomping in the deep snow. It was a superb animal.

Ouyang Fen felt wronged when he looked at the aged horse he was riding. He rode up to Qin Guan and nudged him gently.

"Hey, why is your horse so beautiful? Would you exchange it

with mine?"

It is a lot more pleasurable to share joy than enjoy something alone. The small evil part in Qin Guan's heart was also awakened.

"No problem! We can swap horses later," he answered without hesitation.

Ouyang Fen couldn't believe his own ears, but he fell in step with Qin Guan.

They reached the foot of a small mountain, where the grass was green and small flowers were scattered. A few lambs were munching on the grass leisurely.

Following the contestant's instructions, the models formed a triangle.

The blue sky, green grass, white lambs and handsome riders looked like a perfect painting through the camera lens. The photographer adjusted the height of the tripod and took the first series of photos from a distance.

Then the models got off their horses and gathered behind the contestant, acting like his followers to set off his valiant, heroic upbringing. The second series of photos were close-up shots. Imagining the moment of his victory, the contestant smiled. His brown, sunburnt face was filled with happiness.

The photographer knew how to guide a greenhand. His personal experience created the right vibe.

Finally, he let everyone take a break. They had to finish the third series of photos before the temperature got too high.

The third series would be the running shots. Qin Guan happily handed the Troublemaker's reins to Ouyang Fen, warning him, "I wouldn't swap horses with me if I were you. My horse has a really bad temper. Only I can control it. You can consult with Baiyin and Buhe if you want."

Ouyang Fen was angry. Just as I expected. Qin Guan doesn't want to swap horses with me. Ouyang Fen grabbed the Troublemaker's reins. "A greenhand like you can control the horse, but a veteran like me can't? You just don't want to swap with me!"

Qin Guan shrugged and backed off, but he dared not leave Ouyang Fen alone. He will blame me if there is some kind of accident. Ouyang Fen didn't care about the horse. Only I deserve such a handsome horse. I will stand out in the photos.

The photographer asked everyone to mount their horses again. Ouyang Fen was planning on showing off his riding skills. He put one foot onto the pedal, but the Troublemaker suddenly raised its bottom and back legs, and Ouyang Fen fell off with his foot hanging from the pedal.

Everyone was scared, but luckily the Troublemaker had not started running. Otherwise, Ouyang Fen would have died on that

grassland.

# Chapter 91: The End

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The Troublemaker's eyes were alight with laughter. Silly human beings, not everyone is qualified to be my underling.

Actually, the Troublemaker was a trained racing horse, but it was naughty and would often act outrageously. It was good at such tricks. No big deal. I just threw a person off, and he landed on his butt.

With everyone's help, Ouyang Fen pulled his foot out of the pedal. By then, his face was swollen from the mosquito bites, and his butt was hurting because of the horse. I should always pray before I go out. Why do I have such a bad relationship with animals?

The staff was relieved that Ouyang Fen was all right. The third series of photos would be taken soon. Ouyang Fen was well-behaved. He returned to his own house obediently. Qin Guan, you vile person! You did that on purpose! Just wait and see! This is not over! (Alas, this has become his signature phrase.)

Amid the breeze, the grass was swaying like the waves in the sea. A rider was riding on a running horse. In nature, human beings and horses seemed tiny. The photographer pushed the lens forward, and the horses slowed down gradually. They were in the frame, creating a beautiful picture. The photographer pressed down the shutter, and the whole shooting was finished successfully.



The riders slowed down, and the horses gradually stopped. The photoshoot was over, but everyone was lingering around. They had fallen in love with riding.

Before entering the barn, the Troublemaker looked at Qin Guan reluctantly. Such a pity that he will leave. I'll never met someone so easy to bully.

Qin Guan, on the other side, let out a relieved breath. It was finally over. I couldn't even feel my legs and butt. What a terrible photoshoot. If it wasn't for Sister Xue, I would have been lying in my dormitory, reading and sleeping. How comfortable that would have been!

Master Qin, you forgot all about the delicious meal you had last evening! You deny everything as soon as you put down your chopsticks, huh? Meanwhile, Sister Xue was packing Master Qin's luggage. They had to return to their lodging in that shabby minibus. The models were dirty all over, stinking like horse sweat and urine. The minibus was crowded, so the smell was terrible.

They returned to their lodging, feeling dizzy. They didn't even take a sip of water, they rushed to their rooms right away to take a bath. Qin Guan washed his body twice before he felt better. As he caressed his swollen legs, he realized that he would be sore for the next three days. New riders weren't get used to the shaking on a horse's back. The inside of the leg was the most tender part of the human body, so the close contact had given the riders a whole new experience.

Qin Guan dried off and changed into loose, comfortable

sportswear before he hobbled out. After half a day of physical work, his stomach felt flat. When he got to the yard, he saw that the others looked the same. They were hovering two millimeters above their chairs. It hurt to actually sit down. When the manager served everyone dinner, they cheered up.

At noon, the manager and his wife organized a feast for everyone. There was Bashang mutton boiled in clear soup but cooked without seasoning. The dish was served with sauce. The day lily fried pork was delicious and tender. Eutrophy also gave it a medicinal effect.

Chinese yam was a kind of staple food made from cooked potatoes and oat flour. The small particles were fried with chopped green onion and sesame oil, which were both soft and sweet. The Bashang carbon-baked beef jerky was made from selected beef tenderloins. The texture of each beef stick was clear to see. They were all made traditionally by Inner Mongolian masters who knew everything about air-dried meat. The beef sticks dried naturally and were meticulously processed through baking. Then they were flavoured with the most basic salty seasoning. No additives or corrosion removers were added. It was a tasty, must-have dish in the Bashang area.

The staple food served last was the speciality of the landlady: Bashang oat flour roe.

She mixed oat flour and warm water (preferably local water) and pulled the dough into small pieces. Then she rubbed them with her thumb on a stone plate and steamed them. Before serving them, she poured sauce all over them. The natural ingredients made the

experience even more pleasurable for their taste buds.

They all forgot their pain and enjoyed the feast to their heart's content. They had to be fast again, or Qin Guan would finish all the dishes. Having dined and wined to satiety, the production staff didn't waste anyone's time. They gave out bonuses to the models and expressed their appreciation for their hard work.

Then they packed all the equipment and carried them to the car before heading home. Qin Guan lay on the back seat of Sister Xue's car, but dared not touch the seat with his butt. He was counting the bills he had been given. One, two... six. It was 600 yuan, no more or less. Did they take him for a beggar? He had spent two days working for so little money. Qin Guan was so angry that his nose looked twisted. Before he could complain though, Sister Xue stabbed another knife through his heart. "Well, that will be 200 yuan for me. Don't keep it all."

What could Qin Guan say? She was the money-grubber who had found that unrewarding job for him. And to what effect? What could a magazine with such a small readership do for him?

The "Capital Entertainment" newspaper, which was released every Monday, would have been way better. Suddenly, Qin Guan recalled that the newspaper had interviewed him and Quyang Fen. It was Saturday, so the next issue would be published in two days. Although it had a small readership, the paper was sold at newspaper stands. Qin Guan planned to buy one on Monday to see his debut.

After driving for several hours, Qin Guan walked unevenly to his

dormitory. His roommates asked him details about his trip to the grassland and sneered at him when he said it had not been worth the journey. Qin Guan had gotten to ride a horse, enjoy delicious food, and earn money. He was the only one who would consider this too much trouble. He sure was very talented at attracting hostility! We hate people who make a living on their appearance.

## Chapter 92: A Short Interview

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Qin Guan's roommates tried their best to make fun of him. They told everyone that his butt was swollen, and as a result Qin Guan got a new nickname. People called him "the poor guy with the swollen butt".

Annoyed, Qin Guan slept on his stomach, groaning and moaning all night long. He didn't feel any better the next day. As he was brushing his teeth in the morning, he was thinking about something important. I have no energy to go buy the newspaper today. Who could I ask for help?

Liu Xiaoyang would be a good choice. When Qin Guan returned to the dormitory, he took a coin out of his pocket. "Could you please buy a newspaper for me? I'm too sore to go out today."

Liu Xiaoyang took the coin and jumped off his bed happily. "Which one do you want? Capital Weekend or Capital Daily?" he asked Qin Guan.

Qin Guan answered calmly, "Capital Entertainment."

His answer made Wang Lei curious. College students were seldom interested in that paper. "You never pay attention to entertainment news. Why do you want to buy that newspaper?" he asked.

Qin Guan smiled to himself. He was happy someone had asked. Pretending to be calm, he answered, "No reason, I just gave an

interview to the newspaper, and I'm curious about what it says. That's why I want to buy it." His acting made everyone curious.

"Why did they interview you?"

"Didn't you just win that magazine photoshoot? Why did that newspaper interview you in such a short time?"

Qin Guan coughed and answered indifferently, "Oh, it's nothing important. I just returned to college earlier and participated in a competition with my agent. I accidentally was the capital winner. The photoshoot was one of the prizes. It was just an ordinary job with a poor 1,000 yuan reward. Then I participated in the national competition and won that as well. It was so boring. I had no competition at all. It was boring as hell!"

Then he threw his hair back and struck a pose.

His roommates spoke simultaneously, "You slut!"

Liu Xiaoyang went out happily. When he returned, they all gathered to read the newspaper.

The front-page headline was about the actors of "Princess Pearl", the most popular TV series at the time. Any news about the series were breaking news in the media. They turned the front page, but there was nothing; the second page, still nothing. They went through all eight pages, but found nothing at all about Qin Guan.

It was impossible! Qin Guan took the newspaper and scanned it from beginning to end. Finally, he found the short interview at the bottom of the front page. His photos with Ouyang Fen was as large as half a cigarette pack. No one could recognize Qin Guan without a magnifying glass. Together with the article, the whole interview was the size of a whole cigarette pack.

Readers would hardly pay attention to such a short interview.

"Why such a short interview? He was the winner..."

"Models have a small audience in China."

"Film or TV stars at least get familiar with their audience. Poor Qin Guan. To this day, there has never been a renowned model."

As they talked, Qin Guan read the article, which presented him as the new shining star of the capital model circle. I will be modest about it!

He took a pair of scissors from the drawer and cut the interview off. The newspaper was distributed only in the capital. I have to save it to show off at home during the Spring Festival. I'll share the good news with Cong Nianwei!

Cong Nianwei hung up the phone and burst into laughter. What a silly boyfriend! I'll buy the newspaper just to encourage him.

Huan Jiajia got up unprecedentedly early to buy the newspaper

with the excuse of buying breakfast for her parents. The rest of the pages of the newspaper were used to wrap fried bread sticks.

Meanwhile somewhere else, Ouyang Fen was carefully cutting the interview off and pasting it into a large notebook. Pressing the edges of the paper, he smiled in satisfaction at his cousin's expression of both dislike and joy. My brother has made his first step towards success.

The next day, Qin Guan was escorted into the classroom by Wang Lei and his pillow. He walked in a jerky, uneven way. Everyone's attention was on him as usual. That was the magic of beauty. His status that day had inspired everyone. Under the attention of millions of people, Qin Guan sat down carefully on his chair. He didn't forget to put the pillow under his butt first.

"What's wrong with him? Why is he walking that way?"

"He must be hurt. Did you see the pillow?"

"His butt was hurt!"

"Ha ha ha..."

"How can someone hurt their butt?" It was a valid question.

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"Ha ha ha... You betcha..."

Qin Guan felt stranger and stranger by the minute. He poked Wang Lei, who was sitting beside him, and asked him, "What's wrong with them? Why are they looking at me? Is there anything on my face?"

Wang Lei didn't look at him. "Maybe there's some rice. Feel it yourself."

Qin Guan touched his lips as he looked at Wang Lei.

"See?"

"Did Wang Lei hurt his butt? Impossible! It's rumored that Qin has a girlfriend in QH."

"Poor him! He must be exhausted!"

# Chapter 93: Legend Of Ghost Street

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Qin Guan's butt had made the top ten unsolved mysteries of his department, leaving behind endless legends for future students.

Qin Guan finished the class and waited for Ye Dong and Wang Lei in their dormitory. Ye Dong would be keeping his promise. His creditors had been getting more and more, so he planned on organizing a collective enrolling activity among the college social clubs after the military training. He had asked Li Jie and Mu Lejiang to inform all the clubs.

One of them was the leader of the dancing club, and the other was the director of the camping club. Ye Dong was good at putting his resources to good use.

After their threats, two more names were added to the contract. Only Liu Xiaoyang was left. For friendship's sake, they couldn't leave him alone in their dormitory, so Ye Dong had to treat all his roommates. When they all finished their classes, they got together and headed for Gui Street in a formidable array.

Located in the western part of the Dongzhimen overpass, Gui Street was surrounded by embassies. The foreign visitors and working staff of Beijing could taste authentic Chinese dishes there conveniently. Every year, the restaurants on that street would make tens of millions of yuan from foreign guests. With more than 100 restaurants within more than one kilometre, that area had the greatest density of restaurants in Beijing. That's why it was called the capital dinning street.

They all took the tube there. It was a starry night. Under the light of the lamps, they saw the busy, noisy street. The neon lights around the sign boards were shining, and the lines of restaurants made them dizzy. They had no idea which one to choose.

As a local, Liu Xiaoyang solved the problem for them. He pointed to one of the restaurants in heroic spirit, announcing, "We're going to the Xiao Lin Hot Pot Restaurant".

The others just looked at him, waiting for an explanation. He led his roommates to the restaurant proudly as he said, "You have to know the history of the street first. Do you know what kind of place Gui Street was in the old times?"

"The capital was a quite mannered city even back then. Not only its residents, but the city itself as well. You may be confused. The city is not a living organism after all. How could it possibly follow any rules? That's an ignorant question though. Since the Qing Dynasty, the royal, court-dispatched troops would go through Deshengmen Gate, and convicted criminals would go through Xuanwumen Gate. Dongzhimen Gate was used for wood transportation. Everyone obeyed these rules. The wood was used for coffins! Outside Dongzhimen Gate, there used to be a graveyard."

His audience was thrilled. They all felt the street around them suddenly go cold. Liu Xiaoyan sprayed saliva at them in his excitement.

"Listen to me carefully! The original morning market was held by Dongzhimen Gate, where the peddlers gathered in the small hours

and left at dawn. They lit up kerosene lamps. In the dim light, one could see coffin shops and stands selling other funeral goods. It was horrific. People called it the Ghost Market."

Liu Xiaoyang had lowered his voice. By that time, they had already arrived at the restaurant and sat around a table in the corner of the hall. It was a little far from the lights, and several neon beams from outside were casting mysterious shadows on Liu Xiaoyang's face. The image left everyone speechless. This is a fascinating story, okay? Don't keep us guessing!

When Liu Xiaoyang made sure that he had created a great atmosphere, he continued, "After the foundation of the state, the area was developed and the graves were moved. It was strange, but ever since that market-oriented policy was carried out, many shops along the street went bankrupt, including the only state-run department store. No one could find the secret of the curse."

Liu Xiaoyang's history lesson had turned into a custom introduction and a folk ghost story. Liu Xiaoyang continued enigmatically, "That's when the merchants discovered that only restaurants could make profit on this street. Few customers were here during the day, but it was crowded in the evening. Ha, ha, ha..."

It was his laughter, not his story, that was actually scary. Qin Guan kicked Liu under the table, warning him, "Stop laughing. Go on!"

Liu Xiaoyang waved at the waiter with a mysterious smile. "We'd like to order!"

His shout had frightened them. "You scared us! Continue your story!" They were itching to hear the end. Liu picked up the menu as he went on, "No one knew the truth, but some said that the ghosts would enter the city for dinner. The restaurant business was flourishing. The locals, on the other side, were familiar with these stories. Some of them had even explored the tombs. The legends didn't scare them away. Some people had taken advantage of the crowded evening market and set up small food stands. The stands used to block the road."

"The government believed that this influenced the appearance and administration of the city, so the city managing staff would show up on the street at night."

## Chapter 94: Mysterious Light Spots

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It was useless though. The stands were just small tricycles, so they were hard to capture. Plus, all the peddlers there knew each other. As soon as the city managing staff appeared, the news would spread all over the street in a moment. The staff worked fruitlessly, providing amusement for the customers. Every night the same process was repeated. The staff chased, the peddlers escaped, and the customers followed them to get their pre-paid food.

Qin Guan burst into laughter at the picture. That is exactly my experience as a peddler in Y city, although the people here must have been more interesting than me. Liu Xiaoyang was cheered up by his fascinated audience. "The government realized it was all in vain and decided that banning peddlers was not the way to go. Instead, they set regulations for the stands, supported the restaurants on the street, and named it the Dongnei Restaurant Street."

His listeners were relieved. In the context of this story though, "Gui" meant "ghost", not "tableware". Liu Xiaoyang spread his hands wide. "The first character was not suitable for the formal name of a street, so the government staff racked their brains to find an alternative. The bosses here resisted the change of the name, for they believed that it would destroy the Feng Shui. Finally, they picked a homophone from the dictionary, which was also related to food. Then the government made a large bronze sculpture of the character "簋", which became the symbol of the street. That is the origin of Gui Street", he concluded.

His roommates were enlightened. But how was that related to the

Xiaolin Hot Pot Restaurant? Liu Xiaoyang stared at them in disdain. "A man can't call himself a foodie if he doesn't know this restaurant."

His roommates smacked him on the forehead. "Just go on! We are not locals, you show off!"

Liu Xiaoyang restrained himself and tapped on the menu.

"More than ten years ago, this restaurant was called Xiaolin Restaurant. Back then, there were only few shops along the small alleyway. It was a typical old-time Beijing Hutong. At the time, the locals did not use to eat at night."

"One day, a couple came to the street and opened a small restaurant, selling the simplest dishes, such as fish-flavoured pork slices, fried rice, salads, and liquor at low prices. People gradually gathered here. Every evening, before the couple closed the restaurant, there were always some light spots shining on the door, which made them feel strange."

"When they heard the stories about the street, they thought it was elves that were dropping in for dinner, so they stayed open until very late and lit all the lights. They were not just waiting for human customers, but also for ghosts and elves. Understand?"

"At the beginning, there were no customers at night. They insisted on the operation though, and gradually more and more customers heard that the restaurant was open day and night. This was rare in the capital. As the word spread, several months later

the customers at night had become more than at daytime. Then the light spots disappeared, and never returned.

Liu Xiaoyang threw the menu on the table, "Waiter! We want to order!" He had finished the story.

"And then?" his audience asked.

"What do you mean?" Liu Xiaoyang asked back in confusion. "Then nothing. People heard that business was pretty good at night, and restaurants opened here one by one. The street became popular from then on."

What an anticlimactic story! They knew what the light spots were, but had no idea how the story had actually ended. "It is said that the couple guarded their secret closely, which might be the reason for their flourishing business."

All of them turned their attention to the dishes. As a smart boy, Liu Xiaoyang took this chance to order his favorites. They didn't know that until the dishes were served though. It was okay, because the dishes were good. The spicy crays that cost four yuan each were served in a large steaming basin. They asked for 20 for each person.

Liu Xiaoyang ordered the hot pot double taste, and the juice was free of charge. Before the jardiniere was served, they all buried their faces into the pile of crays.



For a foodie, professionalism was the most important factor. Everyone could taste crays, but how many people could eat them in the right way? It was surely less than 20%.

With Liu Xiaoyang's guidance though, everyone handled them quickly and in the most standard and tasteful way.

First, they separated the body and clamps and held them in one hand. Then they took the meat out of their tails, which was comparatively easier.

Next, they stripped off the clamps and took the meat, sucking up the sauce in the body. Finally, they licked their fingers and finished. Only in this way could one experience the true essence of crays.

Who was hungry? Hands up! Qin Guan and his roommates were eating fiercely. They didn't look up or relax until the hot pot was boiling. Suddenly, Qin Guan saw some acquaintances.

Diagonally across their table, there were several burly chaps, among whom Qin Guan saw Bu Qinglu and Wang Hailiang. There were already two boxes of empty beer bottles piled beside them, but the dishes on their table remained almost untouched. They were drinking before eating.

## Chapter 95: Emergency

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The men opposite them were concentrated on drinking. Qin Guan felt unconsciously fainthearted. Shall I go over and say hello, or pretend I don't know them? He had underestimated his attractive appearance though.

He was always a shining bulb, attracting attention anywhere he went. His face was currently buried in crays, but the surrounding customers became aware of him as soon as he looked up. Wang Hailiang saw Qin Guan and nudged Bu Qinglu, who was sitting beside him. "I think we know that guy over there."

Bu Qinglu, who was tearing at a duck neck, glanced in that direction. He bit hard at the bone and said, "Do you remember that interesting boy we met at the Red Star Bar before the Spring Festival?"

"The Red Star Bar?"

"The boy who used your name to scare his enemy and called himself the big brother of the University of Finance. Did you forget him? You said you'd protect every student of his college."

Wang Hailiang was enlightened. That's why I thought he looked familiar. Interesting!

Qin Guan was trying to hide, but Wang held up a bottle of beer to make a toast.

They discovered me! They noticed my rude behaviour! Qin Guan choked on the chilli and began to cough.

Wang was amused. With a playful intention, he stood up groggily and murmured something to his company. Then he lifted the bottle, planning to make a toast to Qin Guan.

He should be honored that a real big brother is making a toast to him. The others took it as a joke. They were just looking at the students, taking pleasure in Qin Guan's misfortune.

Qin Guan was scared. Oh, my god! How will I deal with him?

"Do you know him? Is he an enemy?" Ye Dong asked him in low voice.

Qin Guan gestured to his roommates. "Don't worry about it. He's just an acquaintance. I don't know him that well, but he's not looking for trouble."

Liu Xiaoyang suddenly remembered something and whispered to Qin Guan excitedly, "Is he Wang Hailiang, the most renowned man in Weigongcun? Everyone here will support him!" You little boy! You also know those kind of circles?

By then, Qin Guan had tensed up. He picked up a bottle from the table, but it was plum syrup, a gift from the restaurant.

He will make a toast to me. Shall I toast with plum syrup?

Suddenly, there was an emergency. A man cut Wang Hailiang's way and stared at him fiercely. "Wang Hailiang, you motherf\*cker!" he cried before stabbing Wang with an iron pike used for kebab. His intentions were clear, and all his attention was on his weapon, a pointed pike shining with an ice-cold light. The light in his eyes was even colder. He was risking his life.

As a veteran soldier, Wang's reaction time was much faster than ordinary people's. Although he was slightly drunk, he had the most logical response. Estimating that the pike would end up in his stomach, he curved his waist to the right side with effort. At the same time, he hit the man's head with the bottle in his hand.

The attacker smiled savagely. I'm no green hand. I know that you value your life. I had already calculated your move. The man shouted loudly, and the pike changed direction with a shake, stabbing into Wang's stomach.

Bu Qinglu and the other men at their table stood up, but they were too far to help Wang. They still tried their best to run over to stop the assassin though. Otherwise, Wang would die from the attack.

"Bang!"

Several chairs fell on the floor. The other customers were rooted to the spot in fear, and the waiter was screaming loudly before the dangerous scene. The criminal was on the verge of insanity.

Regardless of everyone's interference, his only aim was to stab Wang to death.

Just before his weapon stabbed into Wang's stomach, Qin Guan threw the glass bottle in his hand and hit his wrist. It was a large bottle with more than one litre of plum syrup, so it changed the direction of the pike to another part of Wang's body.

The attacker couldn't slow down and knocked Wang to the floor. The two men fell together. The beer bottle was smashed on the head of the attacker at the same time that the man's pike entered Wang's body. Glass shards and beer were raining down on his face. Wang held the pike tightly as he used his spare hand to seize the man's wrist. By that time, Bu Qinglu had reached them. He grabbed the attacker's arm and twisted it at the elbow.

# Chapter 96: Gratitude And Resentment

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"Crack!"

The attacker cried as his bones broke. The pike fell from his hand, which had loosened unnaturally and was now hanging down powerlessly. Wang Hailiang's companions ran over to dispel the frightened customers, and used their chairs to hit the attacker.

Qin Guan couldn't understand their foolish behaviour. Will you take care of the wounded instead of hitting the attacker? Although the wound was not life-threatening, it was still dangerous to get a pike in the stomach. It would be fine if Wang got treated in time though. (However, the position of the wound was still important. A man could die if they were stabbed in an artery. Excessive blood loss could cause death.) Wang's friends were too careless. Bu Qinglu was trying to press against the wound, while the others were just concentrated on fighting. Alcohol made their brains slow.

Qin Guan saw that Wang's jacket was already soaked in blood. "Don't just stand there!" he shouted to the restaurant staff. "Call an ambulance!" His shout made the staff recover from the shock. The cashier dialed the number with shaking hands. "Hello, 911? There was a murder here..."

The man who answered the telephone was confused. "A murder? You should call the police. We are unable to help a dead man."

"No, no. He is not dead, he's wounded. He's got a pike in his

stomach. Hurry up!"

When she hung up the phone, she considered calling the police, but seeing the ferocious, strong men in the restaurant, she hesitated.

The attacker was already lying on the floor, unable to move, with a barely recognizable, swollen face. His resentful eyes were still fixed on Wang Hailiang. He seemed eager to make another attempt if he got the chance.

Wang Hailiang was also lying flat on the floor, pressing on his wound. He didn't feel so bad, it just hurt a little. There was no massive bleeding. This was a trifle in his experience.

He was just wondering when and how he had offended the crazy man. He had never met him before.

The attacker saw the doubt in his expression and laughed. "You are one forgetful big boss. Don't you remember Li Chaoliang? You have occupied his turf!"

Li Chaoliang? Li Chaoliang? Who's that? Wang Hailiang tried his best to recall with his non-functional brain. Bu Qinglu reminded him helplessly, "Ten years ago. Weigongcun. You fought over turf!"

Wang Hailiang suddenly remembered. He had been young at the time. That had actually been his first fight with a big boss. They

had made an appointment to fight with the gang controlling Weigongcun, whose leader had been Li Chaoliang.

At the time, his own boss had told him to challenge Li, the spiritual heart of the gang. Once Li was defeated, the gang would lose in the following mass brawl. He was the best at fighting, so he had been sent out first to fight. The result had been clear. Wang Hailiang had become the big boss of Weigongcun, while his own boss had controlled almost half of the city. It was generally considered that Wang had brought down Li. The attacker had been seeking revenge for Li Chaoliang, who had been his father.

Since Li had been defeated in that battle, he had lost everything. He had lost most of his turf, financial support, and followers. He had been too old to start over. Without followers or friends, he had been like the walking dead. Smoking and drinking, he had had nothing to do but stay at home aimlessly. He had tried to get a normal job, but failed. He had only had gangster skills, so he had been abandoned by modern society.

Tears were running down from the attacker's eyes. He had no idea who he hated more, Wang or his dead father. His mother had already died under the great burden of his father's failure. The man had thought it was his duty to find the source of his family's disaster. Therefore, innocent Wang Hailiang had become his target.

He laughed and shouted at Wang, who still looked doubtful, "Li Chaoliang was my father! You dare claim that you are innocent?"

Wang was shocked. Who could I blame for the injustice?



"Your father was doomed to be defeated by someone, whether that was me or someone else. That's the rule among our kind. We all respect it."

The attacker laughed like crazy. "That's right! You are also doomed to meet that end! I was so silly to try to do it myself. I should have waited for your death..."

The onlookers were staring at the resentful man silently.

Not long after, the ambulance arrived and Wang Hailiang was taken to the hospital. Bu Qinglu expressed their appreciation to Qin Guan and promised that they would be the best of brothers in the future.

Most customers had left the restaurant by then. The whole hall was deserted. Qin Guan's roommates were staring at him in astonishment. Is he a trouble magnet? Anywhere he goes, something big happens.

## Chapter 97: The Playful Shirt

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Staring at the almost untouched dishes on the table, Qin Guan asked, "Shall we continue?" Then he glanced at the messy hall behind him, where several waiters were cleaning up the broken chairs and the blood on the floor. They exchanged a glance and resumed eating the lamb, shrimp and eggs on their table. No big deal. Just keep eating. Our table is far from the crime scene anyway. Under the respectful gazes of the restaurant staff, they finished their meal calmly and left for college.

Meanwhile in the ambulance, Wang Hailiang and Bu Qinglu were reconsidering their future plans.

A warrior wasn't a lifelong career. Even heroes grew old, and they were not heroes. They were just gang members. Considering their current relations and resources, it might be time for them to make their own way and leave the big boss and his followers.

Wang suddenly told Bu, "You are the most honest person I have ever met. Help me make a plan. This is the first time that my career is uncertain. Do you know of any way that we can establish our own business?"

Bu looked at him calmly. "I want to engage in formal business long term. After all, right now we're only sharing the profits of other people's businesses. If you are interested, we can try to set up our own business."

Wang nodded. The pain in his waist distracted him and

prevented him from having a more detailed discussion. "We have to talk about it when I recover. Oh, it hurts! I'm not a young man anymore..."

It was only a small episode in the course of their lives. Time flowed like a river, never stopping for anyone or anything. This affair had been a new beginning for the two of them, but it had not influenced Qin Guan's life.

Qin Guan watched Sister Xue talk with the boss of the J shirts again. It was September, and the J shirts would make their third poster photoshoot. Gallantly, Sister Xue took Qin Guan's trophy to their meeting with the boss at the shooting site. After showing off, she succeeded in increasing Qin Guan's payment. Actually, it was not a real raise. They quit the J shirts poster shoot instead. The reason Sister Xue quit it was fear of ruining Qin Guan's reputation. As a professional model with an official agency, he had formal offers, and Sister Xue was trying to promote him as a top model. The poster photoshoot that she had accepted a long time ago had been far from satisfying to begin with.

If the boss of the J shirts had known the real reason they'd quit, he would have demanded justice. With his flourishing business, formal shops, channels, and market, his brand could be considered third class in China. Therefore, he shouldn't be underestimated.

Sister Xue felt wronged as well. The standard rules for models were much stricter than those that applied to TV stars, singers and movie stars. If the first advisement of a model was too bad, a top brand would reject them automatically, even if they were already a superstar. Top brands wouldn't consider the hardship before one's

success. They would only pay attention to the perfectness of the model and evaluate the compatibility between the brand and the model's level.

As a result, Sister Xue cancelled the collaboration with the J shirts for the formal outfit poster, agreeing only to the casual outfit poster. That unconscious decision changed the development of the J shirts.

On that day, Qin Guan would only take photos for the casual fall collection. Qin Guan was satisfied with the outfits at first glance. They were the most interesting shirts he had worn so far. The designer had made playful shirts, inspired by Qin Guan's cartoon underwear. It was not certain that they would sell, for the style was rare and there were not many products like it in the market. Qin Guan still liked it though. The short-sleeved shirt had a [Calabash Brothers and a Mr. Black](#) print, and the lower hems had been designed to look like bear paws with small flesh pads.

The assistant had bought a giant teddy bear as a bonus for the photoshoot. She'd also had a selfish motive. She wanted to buy her idol a gift with the company's money. Judging by the appreciative expression of her boss, she knew she had made the right choice.

Qin Guan loved the hairy innocent bear. It looks like me! He buried his face in the bear's chest and enjoyed its softness. He heard the photographer shout at him from a distance.

Sun Pengtao had already become the exclusive photographer of the J shirts and a featured photographer in two more magazines. His career was thriving. Sun was pleased to collaborate with Qin

Guan again, but he couldn't stand his silly behaviour. "What are you doing, Qin Guan? Why are you covering your face? What do you want to show the audience? That stupid bear, or the headless person behind its butt?"

How can you critique my idol? As Qin Guan's No.1 fan, the assistant was indignant at the injustice, biting her handkerchief in anger. Qin Guan realized his mistake. He touched his nose awkwardly, laughed and moved the bear away. The bear was indeed soft. A satisfied smile formed unconsciously on his face and was captured by the photographer's acute skill.

A big boy in a blue cartoon shirt was smiling in satisfaction. His eyes were closed, and his long eyelashes looked naughty and lovely.

Two of the most famous animated cartoon series for kids during the 1980s in China.

## Chapter 98: The Girlfriend Present

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Qin Guan was sitting casually on the floor with crossed legs. A big fat bear nearly the same height as him was in his arms. It felt like it was early morning, and the boy and the bear were waking up from a good dream. In the soft yellow lights of the shooting studio, the hair of the bear and the thin hair on Qin Guan's face were clear.

Taking the advantage of her position, the assistant immediately decided to keep the photo. That would be one more picture added to her Qin Guan poster collection. It was enough to make her smile for the whole day.

The photographer put away the camera and saw Qin Guan and the bear lying on the floor side by side. Their heads were close, and the podgy legs of the bear rested softly on Qin Guan's thigh. They looked like two children snuggling up to each other, full of pure, warm childishness. The click of the camera sounded again, and the assistant looked around for her tissue.

The scene reminded the boss of his own daughter, who had had too much food that day. The boss thought that his daughter had looked as lovely as the large bear. Shall I buy some pig's feet for her on my way home? She will look as lovely as that bear in that kid-sized shirt. Dear boss, you might be overestimating your daughter.

Sister Xue had just finished a cigarette outside. Such an easy photoshoot was nothing for Qin Guan. In her spare time, she had set up an interview for Qin Guan with Ni Dalei of New Silk Road. After Qin Guan had won the competition, Ni Dalei had selected new jobs for him. After all, with a domestic prize, Qin Guan's level

had been promoted to somewhere between C+ and B-.

Ni had made several interview appointments, including a shooting for a magazine spread, a brand T show, and a still advertisement. Ni expected Qin Guan's work to increase even further.

Sister Xue hung up the phone, threw away the butt of the cigarette, and returned to the shooting site. She found Qin Guan lying on the floor and embracing a bear with a silly expression on his face. I'm doomed to be his babysitter. I leave for a minute, and the boy starts acting silly again.

When the photographer handed her the photo excitedly though, she understood what the expression "fortune favors fools" meant. The theme of the photos could have been "Angel Dreaming", a sweet but appropriate title. The happy, content smile of the boy matched the cute bear well.

The photoshoot was completed with great success thanks to Qin Guan's cuteness.

Qin Guan was paid 5,000 yuan, out of which 1,500 yuan went to Sister Xue. Sister Xue packed the bag and returned to her car, only to find Qin Guan in the passenger seat, wearing that kids shirt and holding the bear and the money in his hands.

He was smiling at her stupidly, which made her angry. She pushed the big bear away in disdain and started the car. "You are a 19 year-old man, Qin Guan. Why are you still interested in stuffed

toys?"

Qin Guan choked up. Actually, he liked cute things, like idols, Garage Kits, Lolitas... Huh? That was strange. Judging by the age difference between him and Cong Nianwei though, she was also a lolita. Qin Guan nodded, ignoring the reality of his Okatu nature. Sister Xue laughed helplessly at his stubbornness to admit his mistake.

Then she pulled at the bear paws on the shirt sleeves. "Why don't you take that silly shirt off?" Qin Guan moved her hands away and carefully arranged the paws, showing off proudly. "I'll see my girlfriend, and I want to show her my new shirt and give her the bear as a present."

Sister Xue was confused. "I know you like the bear. Why don't you keep it for yourself?"

Hesitating, Qin Guan sighed. "It's more suitable for a girl. Besides, it was for free."

Does Cong Nianwei know how stingy you are, Qin Guan?

Sister Xue had to turn the steering wheel around to drive for QH. When they reached their destination, she kicked Qin Guan out of the car and drove away, leaving smoke behind her. I'm so ashamed to be seen with him!

Paying no attention to the onlookers, Qin Guan put the money in



his pocket carelessly and carried the big bear on his shoulders. He called Cong Nianwei while he was walking. "Is your class over? Fine, I'll go to your dormitory." He ran to her dormitory happily with the bear. Between the small trees, many students saw a big bear running among the leaves, its small tail jumping up and down. Before they could comprehend how a teddy bear could run, Qin Guan had already disappeared.

At the gate of the building, he retreated before the sharp gaze of the administrator.

This young man seems to have a mental disorder. I can't let him in. He may harass the girls! The old woman was sure about her judgment, even more so when Qin Guan began to shout loudly.

"Cong Nianwei! Cong Nianwei!" he yelled as he put the bear on his forehead.

Hearing his shouts, Cong Nianwei and some of her roommates poked their heads out of their balcony. Cong Nianwei burst into laughter when she saw Qin Guan. What's that silly boy doing? It's October, yet he's only wearing a short-sleeved shirt with a waistcoat.

## Chapter 99: The Haunting Love Rival

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Qin Guan's bright blue shirt stood out among the crowd. Cong Nianwei noticed the bear on his head with a smile. It must be a present for me. Cong Nianwei shouted at Qin Guan, "I'm coming!" She stopped by the mirror to check her makeup before she went out. Immediately, her roommates began talking heatedly.

"That naughty girl has kept this a secret! Is he her boyfriend?"

"Have you ever been to the public design class? I know him. He has been in the class with Cong Nianwei."

"Yes, I remember! I know him!"

"Ha! He really is her boyfriend! He must take us out and treat us!"

"I agree!"

When Cong Nianwei met Qin Guan at the gate, she started laughing even louder. His playful shirt was the perfect display of his childish nature. When Qin Guan handed her the big bear, she clearly saw that he was expecting to be praised. Hugging the large bear, Cong Nianwei laughed breathlessly. Where those bear paws on his shirt?

The boat of love had been turned over. Depressed, Qin Guan saw Cong Nianwei off with the large bear.

Cong Nianwei had accepted the present and now expected to be treated. Once dinner was over though, he could piss off. I mean, leave. Cong Nianwei had a class in the afternoon, so she had no spare time to spend with him. Idling around the gate sadly, Qin Guan was looked down upon by the administrator. I was right. He was turned down. The girl accepted his present, but ignored him.

Cong Nianwei came out with a group of girls as bright as 1,000-watt light bulbs. Her roommates had asked to be treated to dinner. Sighing to himself, Qin Guan gave the girls his most splendid smile. It was so shining, it made them dizzy. Hey stop, you drama queens!

Giggling and twittering, the girls were introduced to Cong Nianwei's boyfriend, the host of the dinner. The boy had strange taste, but he was really handsome. If his IQ was inversely proportional to his taste, he would be the perfect boyfriend.

Chattering and laughing, they headed off to eat. They all had class in the afternoon, so a simple lunch would be enough. They could save the fat lambs for a different occasion.

Their destination was the dining hall for overseas students, which was the best choice for students in need of improving their lives. There were all kinds of food there, including western-style food, Chinese food, and dishes prepared with special care. When they were all seated, they saw Chi Hailing sitting at the table across from them.

Incidentally, it was Chi's birthday. He and his roommates had planned on eating there, too.

He had been planning to only invite Cong Nianwei to celebrate in the evening, so he'd chosen to treat the boys at noon. Unfortunately, he had come across Qin Guan again. Maybe I stole Qin Guan's money in my past life. That could be why he always causes me trouble.

His expression turned savage, and his color changed from red to white. His roommates asked him carefully, "What's wrong? Are you feeling sick? Do you have a loose bowel?"

Chi Hailing squeezed the words out between his teeth, "I'm fine. I just saw Cong Nianwei's boyfriend."

"What? Cong Nianwei has a boyfriend? You're not her pursuer? You're the third person?"

His silly friend's voice was loud enough for others to hear. Cong Nianwei's roommates immediately stretched their ears to eavesdrop. Is this a love triangle? The boyfriend and the other man?

Qin Guan had no idea about the exciting drama. He was recharging Cong Nianwei's dining card at the service department of the restaurant. There were seven people in total at their table, and the prices varied from six to 20 yuan. Not expensive!

Qin Guan saw that there were only 96.7 yuan left in her card. That's not enough! (That was enough for Cong Nianwei. Not everyone was a foodie like Qin Guan!) Qin Guan took out 1,000

yuan to recharge the card. Imagining the praise he would get, he made the order happily.

Cong Nianwei's table had become the centre of attention. Most of Chi's roommates were in the same department as her. As a straight-A student who beat the best students from all over the country, she was famous in her department. It was a surprise to everyone that she had a secret boyfriend who had appeared at QH. They were all craning their necks in her direction.

"Where is he?"

"It's just her and her roommates."

"Did you make a mistake, Chi?"

Chi Hailing gritted his teeth. "Definitely not. I'd recognize him even if he was burnt to ashes." Of course, you could never forget a man who had pasted snot on your hand.

"He was ordering. I saw him holding Cong Nianwei's card."

"F\*ck! Is he having a free meal? We'll watch him later."

People had different personalities. There were both clever and stupid friends. Not all the students at QH were sensible. There were many people with a high IQ and a low EQ.

Chi Hailin's best friend was sitting beside him. They were always acting in collusion with each other. I mean, love and devotion. If my best friend is in trouble, I have to support him! He didn't know who Qin Guan was, but he planned to make things difficult for him. This is QH, my own university. I won't be afraid of anybody. Then what? Then nothing. Qin Guan finished his order and returned to the table. Pointing at Chi Hailin, Cong Nianwei warned Qin Guan that he and another boy were coming over.

# Chapter 100: A Sworn Follower With Low EQ

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Qin Guan was sitting beside Cong Nianwei, so Chi's roommates, who were waiting and watching, began to worry about their brother.

Wow! He is so handsome! That's why he won over the heart of the goddess. We should just admit defeat.

His taste is pretty good too. Where did he buy that shirt? It's amazing!

Hey, guys! What the hell kind of taste do you have?

Qin Guan turned in the direction Cong Nianwei was pointing at. When he saw Chi Hailin, he smiled.

When Chi was closer, Qin Guan asked Cong Nianwei, "Do you have a tissue?" Cong Nianwei took a tissue out unconsciously and handed it to Qin Guan. Qin Guan blew his nose with it and folded it into a small ball, waving it at Chi. Before Chi could explode, Qin Guan threw the ball into a dustbin nearby and looked at him innocently.

The girls had no idea about what had happened before. What they saw was only a deep malevolence between Chi and Qin Guan. Their evaluation of Chi suddenly changed for the worse. Yes, you have pursued Cong Nianwei with perseverance, but she already has a boyfriend. You've been too vicious to her official boyfriend. You're quite an unreasonable guy!

Chi's face changed numerous colours in a moment. His best friend did not have good vision, as he was the one to provoke Qin Guan first.

"Hey, you! That's right, you! Are you Cong Nianwei's boyfriend?"

Qin Guan smiled. This is a rash fellow with some poor provoking skills. Qin Guan kept silent, waiting for his next words.

"You're so..." He looked at Qin Guan's face. "So... so handsome." Then he scanned Qin Guan's figure and continued unconsciously, "Your figure is excellent, and your taste is unique."

Cold sweat ran down his forehead. He had originally wanted to sneer at Qin Guan and make him shrink back, but he couldn't find any shortcomings on him. He is perfect.

Suddenly, he realized his biggest advantage. "But your studies..."

Cong Nianwei knew what he was about to say. "He studies at the Capital University of Finance and Economics," she said, pointing at Qin Guan.

The boy changed his attitude at once. "And your studies are pretty good. You are the perfect man. Could you show Chi some mercy and give up Cong Nianwei?"



Some of the girls spit out their water, while others started coughing. They were all left speechless by his words.

That boy is amusing. The boy felt sorry for his incoherent speech and pulled Chi close to apologize before retreating.

Chi Hailin was sad too. As he stood in front of their table, he realized he had nothing to say. He had no argument to provoke Qin Guan with. He was unwilling to give up though, so he asked Cong Nianwei directly, "Cong Nianwei, today is my birthday. Are you free this evening? I'd like to treat you to dinner."

Cong Nianwei looked at Qin Guan reassuringly before she answered calmly, "Sorry, I'll be spending this evening with my boyfriend."

After such a clear rejection, Chi returned to his table despondently, without any appetite for his birthday banquet. His best friend tried to cheer him up, "Don't get discouraged. When her boyfriend leaves, she may have time to have dinner with you."

The others couldn't stand him anymore. His EQ had to be below 500.

"In fact, you never confessed your love to Cong Nianwei. She may have no idea that you love her. You have waited for more than a year, and now she has a boyfriend. You could try to make a formal confession. If you get rejected, you can put a formal sentence on your love. At least your emotions will be worthwhile."

His encouragement made Chi Hailin resolute. I'll confess my love to Cong Nianwei this evening! Qin Guan had no idea about his plan. If he had the ability to predict the future, he would snuff out that fire while it was still a flame.

During lunch, the girls asked Qin Guan some basic questions.

They were itching to know more. How did this boy fall from Heaven and unexpectedly win Cong Nianwei's heart? Where is he from?

"Qin Guan, are you the same age as us? How old are you?"

Qin Guan put a meatball in his mouth. "I'm a sophomore too. I'm 19 years old."

"How did you meet Cong Nianwei?" All the girls were listening carefully.

"We were classmates in senior high school for three years. We were in the same science class." Qin Guan swallowed another mouthful of food.

"How did you win her heart?"

"I was really charming. At our first meeting, Cong Nianwei was so shocked by my charm that she bowed before me... Ouch! That hurts! Don't pinch me! My bad!" Cong Nianwei had pinched his thigh as punishment for his exaggeration.

"Actually, I was pursuing her shamelessly. Then she took mercy on me and promised to be my girlfriend..." Qin Guan held Cong's hand under the table.

All the girls were laughing. Cong Nianwei's boyfriend was so cute. Then they reached the most critical point. "Which stage are you two at?"

Qin Guan looked unconsciously at Cong Nianwei, who was drinking sweet corn soup calmly. I have to be careful. Anything I say may get me in trouble. I feel like a soldier on a minefield. Qin Guan answered carefully, "I hold her hand." Then he pretended to be shy, implying that he was still a pure boy.

(You old dog! Don't act like a green hand. Actually, you are pretty old.)

The girls found this funny. "So you are that innocent! Just holding hands? You are not in kindergarten! You have to be positive, Qin Guan!"

"His face is red. What a shy boy!"